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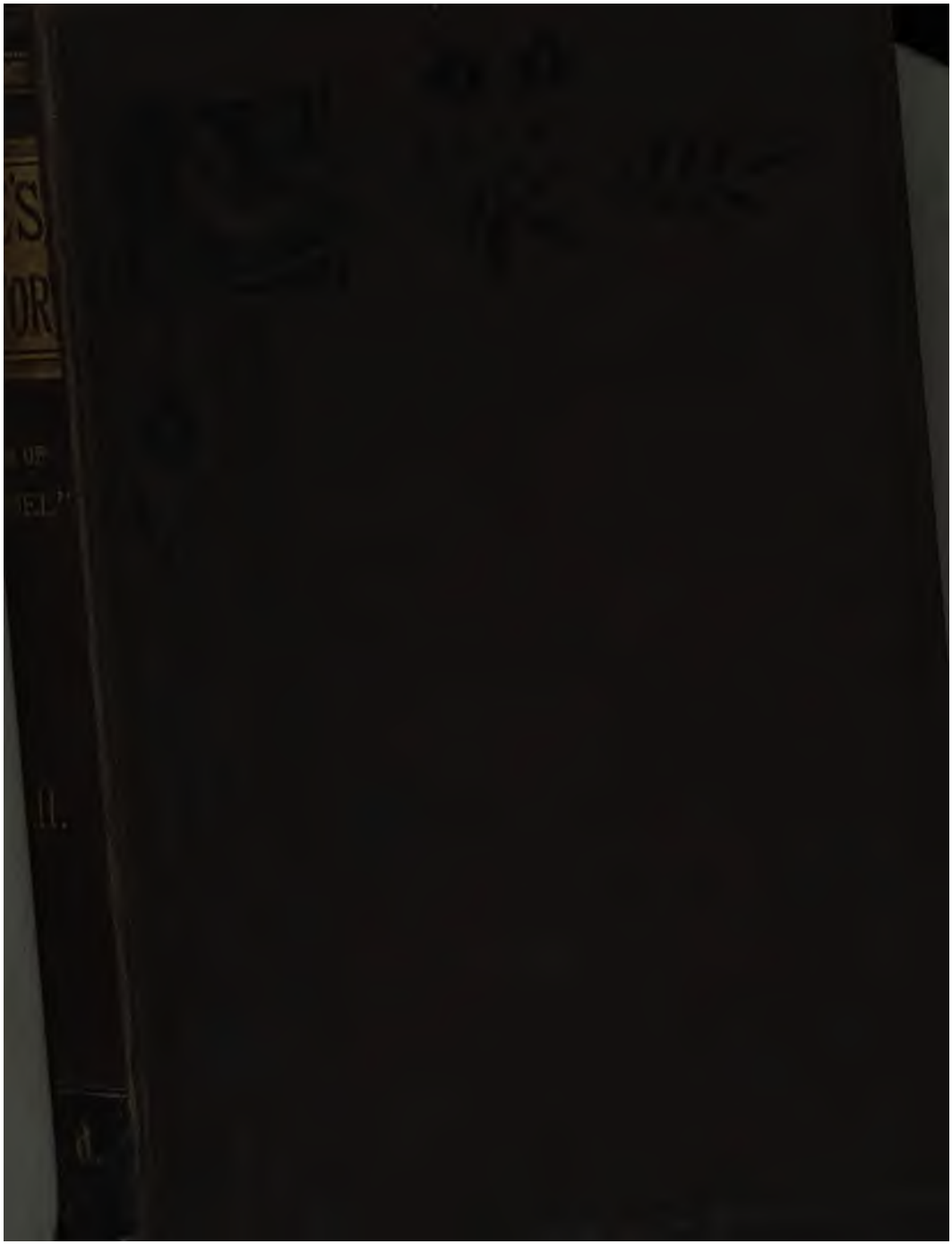

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CAMILLE'S TORMENTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"WE ARE WORLDLINGS," "ROSA NOEL,"

&c., &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CAMILLE'S TORMENTOR.

CHAPTER I.

ONLY A MAN'S MESSAGE OF FAREWELL TO HIS FRIEND!

LADY AMY found to her mingled pleasure and trepidation, that she was to be taken to dinner by the great Professor Twysden; while Mrs. Twysden who, in addition to being a bride, was the niece of a duke, was taken by the host, Mr. Carnac.

It was a dinner of fourteen. Among the guests were the Mountjoys, Mr. Blagrave, and the De Thomé.

Dr. Twysden was slim and spare, with shaven lips, yet with a beard beneath the chin. His features were sharp and delicate; he had a half-melancholy, half-bitter smile, and there were fine-drawn lines about his thin lips, not graven by Time;—perhaps the acquisition of deep knowledge, wherefrom were wrought those denials that terrified gentle souls, had marked them there.

His hands were fragile, and he made slow, gentle motions with them as a mesmerist might. These slight, waving gestures seemed somehow to fasten the meaning of his words more closely to the mind of his listener; not that his voice, simply, did not chain the attention,

for though so low and soft, it was supremely impressive. Sympathetic too, but you felt that it was an impersonal sympathy, not for you, specially, but for poor nature-tortured humanity in the aggregate. If he looked from "Nature up to Nature's God," it was because to him, Nature's God was science. And yet, if he does not believe in a God, why does he so often say, "God forbid," and "God knows?"

Lady Amy, as she ate her soup, wondered if by piling her whole stock of ideas together, she could make one solitary extraction worthy of being listened to by the great man.

"What an incongruous pair we are!" thought she. "A paroquet's whistle and a clap of thunder are as alike in sound as his conversation and mine would be in sense. But the truth is, since I cannot

possibly reach his level, he must come down to mine."

Then aloud.

"You have not been long in Wrode, I think, Dr. Twysden?"

Dr. Twysden replied that he had only been in Wrode two days; and then, turning a little towards his fair and frivolous neighbour, began to give her a spell-binding description of how he had spent the day. There was a powerful charm in his voice, as well as in his well-chosen and graphic words. Lady Amy listened to him with delight.

Shallow-pated though she was, she found the change refreshing from such commonplace as she was wont to hear, to this forcible and grand word-painting.

After this, conversation went on smoothly, agreeably between them. Lady Amy, at length, asked him his opinion

on spiritualism. His opinion of it, of course, was but low and poor.

"If I could come back," said Amy, dreamily, "if I could come back and visit anyone I chose, and say things to them that would sink into their heart, I think I would be glad to die."

Dr. Twysden looked at her with an expression of deeper interest in his weary grey eyes than he had heretofore shown.

He put down his knife and fork, and laid his hand on her wrist with a touch light as the poise of a butterfly.

There was an electric power in this touch. Lady Amy felt sure that it made her turn pale; it seemed to make her somehow more accessible to whatever words the Professor was about to say.

"I wish that you could solve the mystery, and return to tell us of it," he

said. "But—if you desire to sway anyone, do it now, while you are in the flesh, because——"

"Please do not finish," said Lady Amy, shuddering; and Dr. Twysden adroitly turned the subject.

Afterwards in the drawing-room, Lady Amy made Blagrave come to her side. She had drawn herself aloof with express intention.

"Mr. Blagrave," she said, "I want to speak to you about Miss Glyn. But first, being a selfish person, let me ask you one question that interests myself; and that you must be good enough not to think a strange one." With a haughty little motion of the head.

Blagrave silently bowed.

"This afternoon," proceeded Lady Amy, becoming even paler than she was before, "as I stopped by the drawing-

room window to gather some passion-flowers, I unintentionally caught something you were saying to Miss Glyn about—a man giving a message of farewell—in Paris—as he was on the point of leaving for England, I fancied you mentioned the name—Langdon. Was it Camille Langdon who left the message with you?"

She could hardly control either voice or features, as she said that name. Speaking it, seemed to involve an anguish like to parting with some possession incalculably prized and dear.

"Yes," answered Blagrave, feeling a wondering compassion that he could not show, "it was Camille Langdon."

Lady Amy plucked and tore at the passion-flowers at her breast.

"You said," continued she, striving with all her might to speak uncon-

cernedly, "you said that he was coming to England?"

"All but on his way," answered Blagrave.

"You said that he looked ill?"

The courage that noble blood brings, came to her aid now. She spoke calmly; although the colour continued to desert her cheeks and lips.

"He did look very ill, Lady Amy," returned Blagrave, gravely. "If I had not been a stranger to him, I should have begged him not to attempt a journey with fever, and impending illness in his eyes, on his face, his lips, and in his shaking hands. But it was a mere chance encounter; we had never met, even, before. I could not speak to him, a stranger, as if he had been a friend. Besides, my interest and concern were not the same that they would have been for a man I

knew, instead of one I had merely heard of. But I wished Denarié had been there."

"He was coming to England!" murmured Lady Amy, like one in a dream. Then, under her breath. "Oh, God! what have I done?"

"Thank you," said she aloud, and turning again, with a forced smile to Blagrave, "I had a reason for wishing to know about—this. And was that all? He gave you the message for M. Denarié, and went away."

"Precisely. He said as nearly as I can remember, 'Be good enough to tell him how sorry I am not to have seen him, for I leave for England this afternoon, my return is doubtful.'"

Amy sat a moment in silence. What overwhelming regret and wild anguish for the irretrievable she felt, may few

souls have the misfortune to know.

Presently she shook herself free from the suffering-caused incapacity for speech which was threatening to rob her of power even to articulate, and urging herself into simulated calmness, began talking of other things; confident that her companion would broach the subject of Miss Glyn, which he did, as soon as he could avail himself of a pause.

It was not a time, or place, to speak as fully as he intended doing; but the way was opened for a longer, freer, more thorough conversation on the morrow.

Some one else came to speak to Lady Amy, and Blagrave moving away, joined a cluster of men surrounding Dr. Twysden. But the large-minded propounding of views regarding Nature's sublime disregard for the individual, and simple furtherance of the good of humanity in

the aggregate, could not divest his mind of the sad, sorrowful story of that bright-haired, fair-faced, jewelled individual over there by the piano, whose heart he had unintentionally wrung by that simplest of all statements which he had made—a man's message of farewell to his friend. Then his mind reverted to Georgie's odd hesitation in answering his question regarding this same man. "*At least*——" what was she going to add? He must know to-morrow. She must withhold nothing in all her life and career from him.

He was a very observing man, and he fancied he detected a slight avoidance of Lady Amy, on the part of some of the lady guests assembled to-night. It was slight, indeed, but to him it was perceptible. He regretted that his sweet Georgie should be under the roof of a

woman whose position did not bring her consideration and respect from her own sex.

Certainly, at this very moment, Lady Amy's manner was not all that could be desired in the way of sobriety. But he felt sure that the ringing laughter and gay, wild words were from a bruised and bleeding heart.

Alone in her brougham, Amy flung herself back, and hid her face in her hands.

"If I had only known! If I could but have heard this before! If I had made this clever, reserved fellow a friend, instead of finding him uncongenial—uncongenial! Yes, he was too clever and good for me. He might have told me this. But could he, would he have told me, under the circumstances? On his way to England! What has it meant?

Have I done him injustice after all? Is it too late? Ah, too late! too late!"

Tears rained from her eyes; convulsive sobs shook her. The violent fit of crying over, she leaned back spent with emotion, exhausted by a grief so wild and angry that it endangered her powers of endurance. Violent and unreasonable, the sombreness of her own future life without the one man she had loved, hated, and loved in mad alternations, appalled her. Already she would have done anything, given anything, to recall the legal fiat that had gone forth. But the law does not rescind its sentences.

As she approached her own gate, she was surprised to see a vehicle drawn up in front of it, or nearly in front of it.

Coming nearer still she discovered that the trap was the dog-cart of Mr. Chilian

Grey, and that it was empty; its owner standing on the pavement talking to some one who leaned over Lady Amy's own railing. That some one she recognised as Miss Glyn.

She was leaning over the railing talking earnestly to the old man.

Lady Amy's brougham stopped before the gate, its occupant prepared to alight.

"How can you resist speaking to her?" asked Georgie in a low tone of Mr. Grey.

"It is not easy to resist it!" muttered he, between set teeth. "But what has actuated me throughout, holds me in check now"——

"And that is *pride*," said Georgie boldly.

He shrugged his shoulders; fixing a hungry gaze on the light figure that

stepped from the brougham, and pausing, said:

"Miss Glyn? Georgie, is that you?"

"Yes, Lady Amy," replied Georgie, moving away; and simultaneously with her motion, Mr. Chilian Grey springing into his dog-cart was whirled off to the jingling of his ponies' bells.

The lady and her companion entered the house together.

"Why does not your old friend come to the house like other civilized beings?" asked Lady Amy, when they had entered the drawing-room.

"Because he is strangely unlike other civilized beings," replied Georgie collecting herself, and returning the other's direct gaze.

"It is inconsiderate of a man old enough to know better, to make you lean over the street railings at eleven o'clock at night

that you may have the privilege of talking to him. How did he get at you? did he ring the bell, and request you to come out?"

"Oh no," cried Georgie, "he would not ring this bell for the world!"

"Would he not? And why, pray?" asked Lady Amy opening her eyes.

Georgie became a little confused.

"You know what he is, or what he is supposed to be, Lady Amy? a harmless recluse, very eccentric"——

"And what is he like in reality? Come, you have been strangely uncommunicative about him. Tell me precisely what he is like. It will divert my mind a little, perhaps."

"But I have not told you yet how I came to be speaking to him over the hedge," said Georgie evasively.

"Tell me first what he is like."

"He is clever, proud and ill-tempered—but a man any woman might dearly love," said Georgie with fervour.

Lady Amy looked thoroughly astounded.

"My dear Georgie! do you prefer him—that old man—to Mr. Blagrave?"

"Prefer him to Mr. Blagrave!" cried Georgie, the blood flying to her cheeks, "oh, no, no, no!"

"Yet you speak of him almost rapturously—as if you wished to impress me with a sense of his merits. Proud and ill-tempered, but a man any woman might dearly love! why did you happen to use those words Georgie? It is an odd way to speak of a man whose days for being loved *d'amour* must be over, quite; for he looks seventy."

"It was not chance that made me

say those words Lady Amy. I *meant* to use them."

"But I dislike mysteries," replied Lady Amy a little haughtily. "Pray, what where you talking about just now?"

"About *you*, Lady Amy."

Lady Amy frowned. She was thoroughly roused and nettled.

"This will not do at all!" she cried augrily, "I am terribly surprised at you, Miss Glyn. Talking about *me!*"

Frightened at her threatening face, Georgie rose up, and knelt down by her side.

"Do not misjudge me," she cried, clasping her hands, "oh, Lady Amy, if you knew—if you knew!"

"If I knew what?" cried Amy checking a time-honoured, well-known inclination to stamp her foot. "Get up, Miss

Glyn and speak reasonably. I insist on knowing what you mean."

Georgie obeyed her by rising; but there her obedience ended, for she answered sadly,

"I cannot tell you. And what good would it do? As he says, it is too late!"

Lady Amy was silent; her lips fell apart like those of a mystified child. She was dumb-foundered. Her amazement had reached the point of being an acute emotion.

Presently she gained her voice, and lost her temper.

"I cannot, and will not, have riddles talked to me!" she said vehemently. "I've never tolerated it; you must explain what you mean, or—"

The piteous expression in Georgie's

face softened her; she paused; then recommenced.

"Don't look so frightened. Whatever you may do or say, I will not treat you as Mrs. Mountjoy did. But what would Mr. Blagrave say, if he could see you, and hear you?"

"I mean to ask Mr.—Grey to let me tell Mr. Blagrave—"

"Tell Mr. Blagrave what?" said Lady Amy impatiently, as Georgie paused in confusion.

"Tell him—*all*," answered Georgie, finding *all* the most convenient word that ever was coined.

"You were not going to say that," said Lady Amy, temper getting the better of her again. "You were going to be more explicit. And will you kindly apply for leave to tell *me* also; as it

seems I am made a topic of conversation between you."

"I will," said Georgie heartily. Lady Amy was mollified somewhat.

"Come now," said she coaxingly, "tell me what this proud, ill-tempered, lovable old grey-beard said of me."

But Georgie shook her head. "I must get leave from him first," said she in her soft, flexible voice.

"With all your gentleness, and pretty feminine softness, you have a sort of quiet power and strength," said Lady Amy. "I feel that if I were to go into one of my worst rages, and rave and storm at you to tell me, it would not move you one bit."

"It is your coaxing tone I can hardly resist," said Georgie smiling.

"You are a little bit of a Jesuit, Miss Glyn, in your way of making, or rather

not making replies. But do you know, I felt very low as I drove home, and now I feel quite roused and stirred. I hope it will last until I can get to sleep. I think I must really have some champagne to keep up the pressure. Will you ring, please?"

Georgie, noting the white cheeks, each with its rose-coloured spot no larger than a rose-leaf, the hazel eyes bright and dilated with excitement, repulsed mentally the idea of stimulant for that high-strung organization.

"Lady Amy," she said earnestly, "champagne, the last thing at night, will give you, as they say, *real* pain in the morning. Please do not drink it!"

"Do not dictate to me, Miss Glyn," responded Amy coldly, "but be good enough to ring."

"Sweet, my lady," said Georgie with

pleading tenderness, "do not make me. Your eyes are so wild and bright now, and each of your cheeks looks as if a fire-god had kissed it. You look as if you needed rest, and something like Valerian, or sal-volatile, to calm your nerves, rather than anything to excite them."

"Oh! very well, rather than have any more fuss about it, I will not order it," acquiesced Amy, but not very graciously. "I had an idea you were a little gentle, clinging thing; not a rather arbitrary, obstinate young woman. And now you may go to your room, if you choose; and tell Burrard she need not wait up for me; there is no use for me to go to bed. I shall not sleep. I never sleep now till dawn!" she sighed.

"I will run up and tell Burrard," said Georgie, "but then do let me come

back and stay with you. I do want so much to hear about your dinner party, and the renowned Dr. Twysden."

Lady Amy consented; and they sat together until the clock had struck one, and the lamp gone out with a splutter.

Lady Amy, with excited words and laughter, mimicking people, taking off their peculiarities, talking fast and gaily, while Georgie played the part of appreciative audience.

"There's one person who has nothing to mimic—nothing to ridicule," said Amy, as they went up stairs together, "that is your grave, handsome lover, Mr. Blagrave; and he is coming here to-morrow morning."

"I liked Mr. Blagrave from the first time I saw him," said Georgie.

"Oh, you must not call him Mr. Blagrave any more; you must cut a

syllable off your own name, and call him George."

"Let me come in and help you," said Georgie, as they paused at the door of Amy's room.

"Will you? Thanks."

So Georgie entered.

It was a charming room; papered with a *sky paper*, not intended for the walls of a room so much as for the scene of a theatre. Among the little white clouds that dotted its cerulean blue, Lady Amy had pasted gaudy coloured butterflies and birds; perching on precarious piles of chairs and tables for the purpose, and having one or two bad falls in consequence.

Georgie unclasped the necklace from a neck as fair as pearl; took the flowers from the rippling hair with its golden reflections; loosened the bright, long

tresses, and brushed them into an undulating silken mass.

Anything more fascinatingly fair than Lady Amy divested of dress and jewels, and half-veiled by the glory of her golden locks, she had never seen.

"Poor Mr. Chilian Grey!" sighed she, in accents of the profoundest pity.

Lady Amy seized her by the shoulders and shook her.

"What *do* you mean?" cried she, but quite good-temperedly. "Tell me, has the old idiot—has he, to speak out plainly—*fallen in love with me?*" she laughed, mockingly.

"Yes, to tell you the truth, he *has* fallen in love with you," answered Georgie, gravely.

"I remember that he did stare at me tremendously when I first met him;

and I daresay he may often have seen me passing his house."

"Yes, he has often seen you," answered Georgie, in the same serious tone.

Lady Amy clapped her hands and laughed louder than ever.

"Peeped at me, I suppose, through his lowered Venetians! This is great fun; it is delicious. And would he like to come and call?"

"No," said Georgie, "a yoke of oxen could not draw him here."

"Oh, you make a mystery about him only to tantalize me. How old do you think he is, Georgie?"

"I cannot possibly tell."

"Five-and-twenty," suggested Amy, ironically.

"Older than that."

"Seventy? He looks it."

"No; not seventy."

"Prematurely grey and old-looking, perhaps. Fifty?"

"Perhaps."

"Go!" laughing, and pushing her towards the door. "You are a tease. Go!"

"Do I look as if I were merely trying to teaze you, Lady Amy?" said Georgie, turning suddenly and confronting her with a tragic face, and deeply meaning eyes. Then, before Amy could retain her, she ran into her own room and closed the door.

Long after she was asleep, wretched Lady Amy Bellamy paced the room, weeping, and uttering stifled exclamations.

The amusing thought of Mr. Chilian Grey soon vacated her mind, and in rushed the old bitter thoughts, memories,

regrets, wearying her with their gnawing persistency.

Dawn lighted the room with its faint uncertain, chilly glimmer, before she was able to sink into her broken rest.

CHAPTER II.

VICTIMS OF WHEELS—AND OF OTHER THINGS.

GEORGE BLAGRAVE'S talk with Lady Amy was over, and he and Georgie were left alone together; Amy having tripped off to see her mother, to arrange with her about going to Brighton, and to tell her of Miss Glyn's engagement.

"Lady Amy can be very fascinating if she chooses," said Blagrave to Georgie.

"Indeed she can. How I wish she

was not separated from her husband!"

"So do I. And, by the way, darling, speaking of her husband, where else, besides Paris, have you seen him?"

"I cannot tell you until I ask him if I may," said Georgie, shaking her head to give emphasis to words not very emphatically spoken.

"*Ask* him?" echoed Blagrave, astounded. "Is he *here* that you can *ask* him? I thought he was in Trouville, where he had flown with—someone."

"It was Mr. Conrady who said all that; Mr. Conrady who maligned him. Yes, and *bought* someone to witness against him! And Mr. Conrady is a scampish liar."

"Good Heavens! Is this my gentle Georgie, talking about 'scampish liars.'"

"Even your gentle Georgie must sometimes call things by their names," said Miss Glyn, with rather a shame-faced look. "My great terror is that Lady Amy will marry him! He is so rich, so terribly rich! But do not let us talk of him any more. He shall not have my lady-fair if I can help it; and I shall do my very best to prevent him."

She knitted her brows together with as determined a look as her soft face could assume.

Then they talked of themselves; and soon were absorbed in each other.

Blagrave took a mental photograph of Georgie's fair face, simply-arranged hair, slender white hands—ringless now, but before another morning to be adorned by a great pear-shaped pearl of his own choosing. The black dress

which fitted her slender figure so trimly. A dear little girl almost any stranger would have thought her; but to him, who felt her to be already soul-united with himself, she seemed a compensation for every ill he had suffered at the hands of Fate.

Lady Amy, returning from Lady Rosehew's, found him still there. She made him stay for luncheon; and it was not until after four o'clock that he went away, promising then to return in the evening.

"You treat me more as if I were your sister than your companion, Lady Amy," said Georgie, with abounding gratitude and affection.

"I like you, child," answered Lady Amy trying to speak in the careless, heartless tone, she now was beginning to adopt. "If my heart was not such a

battered old thing, I think I should love you."

The tears rushed to Georgie's eyes. "Oh, do love me!" said she coming close beside her, lifting the blue-veined, high-bred looking hand, and laying her cheek against it.

"What is the use? I should only lose you. I feel now that Mr. Blagrave only leaves you with me for a very little while. And as for your sacrificing yourself to me, that is nonsense. Besides—"

"Besides what? I think I know though what you were going to say. You are going to change your name and your fate again?"

Lady Amy neither denied nor acquiesced. A darkly sorrowful look settled on her face.

In an instant she had jumped up

exclaiming, that she must go to her skating lesson at the Croftons.

"You shall come with me, if you like, Georgie."

"Will you please let me stay at home, Lady Amy? I have an idea that Mr. Chilian Grey will drive past here at about seven, and I want to stop him and ask him if I may tell you his secret."

"But you have told it already, have you not?" asked Lady Amy laughing and blushing.

"No," answered Georgie, purposely using her most impressive tone as she had done the night before.

"Your tone, when you speak of this old man, is anything but a light comedy tone," said Lady Amy with a speculative look at her.

"It ought not to be," returned Georgie with unabated gravity. "It *ought* to be

a tone suited to a dark and mournful tragedy."

"Melodrama!" said Lady Amy with a little mocking laugh, and ran away, saying "I shall come back all hungry for the promised disclosure."

Georgie sought to detain her, but she slipped from her grasp, and went off, still laughing like Puck. But as she came past the door again, Georgie went swiftly towards her, and laying a hand on her arm said.

"Come back praying that you may be able to hear it, Lady Amy!"

Amy started and gasped. Then recovering herself made some exclamation like "Good Heavens!" and went on her way, rather excited.

The skating lessson was a great success, thanks to the devoted assistance of Mr. Conrady.

Under his auspices, she learnt to strike out; and exchanged her meaningless patten-walking for slides; of uneven length, it is true, being much longer with the right foot than with the left, but still slides not steps.

Again M. and Mme. de Thomé were there. And Medora Crofton, with bewitching smiles and ways, had at length obliged M. de Thomé to succumb (for what man could resist her) and strap skates on to his own feet.

Poor *patineur sans glace!* it was a needless piece of cruelty, surely on the part of the matchless Medora, to make him surrender dignity, coolness, the comfort of a body without an ache or pain, and have instead a laughter-provoking figure, always out of the perpendicular, and often painfully so, as when he sat down hard in the middle of the

room, and his wife skated over him, and also sat down hard just in front of him, making her handsome face grotesque with grimaces.

Poor M. de Thomé waxed exceedingly warm, moreover; warmer than he had been since the red sun of Algeria beat on his képi-covered head, and he was aware of having two bruised knees and an excoriated elbow.

Medora, meanwhile, a piece of cruel loveliness, sat by the window, smiling, and faning herself with a deliciously big fan, that gave refreshing streams of air no doubt—and watched him.

An Englishman as horribly hot as he was, would quite frankly, quite unreservedly have taken out a pocket-handkerchief as big as a flag-of-truce and comfortably mopped his countenance; but the dainty little Frenchman could only bring

himself to stealthily produce a small, fine, scented pocket-handkerchief, which he wafted across his face, as if he were brushing off a rose-leaf or a gnat.

Lady Amy, concluding the afternoon's performance by one grand tumble "from her boots to her hat," as she expressed it, made Mr. Conrady take off her skates, and then bade her adieus.

It was nearly seven o'clock, as Medora, in sky-blue, trimmed with natural-coloured feathers, and with her usual posy of Arabian jessamine, breathing an odour of delight as she moved, accompanied them to the little gate in the lane. Medora, heartlessly laughing at the Medora-inflicted sufferings of M. de Thomé; and with her fan in one hand, and a great key in the other, looking like a symbolical picture for a secret society.

"And now for my answer," said Conrady, with undisguised excitement as they entered into the lane. "I did not sleep a wink last night thinking of it all. I've been longing for this moment; I should have longed for it still more insanely, if I hadn't had you half in my arms all the afternoon."

"What a coarse way you have of expressing yourself," muttered Amy, frowning angrily. "I believe I was going to say something that you might *possibly* have liked—but I will not now."

"You won't be so infer—so awfully cruel!" cried her black-visaged lover in a bolder tone than he had hitherto used. "Come, say—say—say *Patrick*," (the name came out with a wrench) "Patrick I love you, and will be your adored wife."

"I cannot say anything of the sort,"

replied Amy, who was truly feminine enough to check the half-derisive, half-angry manner of answering which his words provoked, and speak with quiet gravity; replying to the *spirit* of the man, rather then to the unrefined form of expression which that spirit manifested itself in. "You must give me a longer time still, to decide what is a matter of the last importance to me—and to you!"

"I cannot wait!" cried he violently. "I shall feel as if you were slipping from my hold; and I'd go through fire and water—yes, or wade through blood to have you mine! God! what have I not done already to get you!"

"What have you done?" cried she, turning on him sharply.

"I've suffered awfully; more than any man ever suffered," answered he, evasively,

and speaking with a burning glance, a wildly passionate tone.

"Leave me a day or two longer," said Amy soothingly, coaxingly.

They now were very near to Hellmuth Lodge; before whose gate was the dog-cart, evidently waiting for its owner.

As they came opposite to it, Amy saw Mr. Chilian Grey emerging from the door.

Prompted by the tormenting, tantalizing spirit that was her *fidus Achates*, she said to Mr. Conrady,

"I am so lame; so lame! both my ankles are wrenched and strained; may I take your arm?"

Mr. Conrady gave a rapturous consent, and Lady Amy slipped her hand through his arm, for the purpose of sending a pang through old Chilian Grey's heart.

There was heard the jingling of bells,

as Mr. Chilian Grey drove up behind them. Very close to the kerb-stone did he come; darkly revengeful did his face look; his whip was held with a firm gripe, and upraised in a terribly suggestive position.

He checked his cobs, and drove slowly behind the lover-like looking pair who sauntered unsuspectingly along, talking earnestly together. He shifted his whip so that he had a firmer grasp of it, turned his furious glance to meet that of Conrady (Amy was much too fine a lady to even glance at him, especially after what she had been told by Miss Glyn) *and passed on!*

Whatever it had been that was to accompany his threatening look, failed of accomplishment. Camille Langdon, in that moment of supreme anger, remembered a woman's presence, and his gentle-

manhood forbade his inflicting the blow that would have been such a rich delight to him to give. He drove on.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Conrady, "what a look that old fellow gave me! If looks could kill, I should be as dead as mutton."

"He seems not to have outgrown the fires of youth, notwithstanding his grey hairs," answered Lady Amy, following Mr. Chilian Grey's bent form with her eyes.

Conrady was silent for a moment, musing over that burning, savage glance.

As he was parting with Lady Amy at her gate, Mr. Grey's ponies turned the corner and came slowly down the street.

Conrady bade his last, passionate farewell, and went slowly up the street.

Lady Amy lingered for a moment, and looked after him.

As Mr. Grey came alongside of the other, Lady Amy saw him raise his whip, and with a look of unchecked fury, deal Conrady a blow across the face; a fierce blow right across the face, that struck his hat off, and left him reeling, his dark, coarse hair ruffled by the wind.

Mr. Grey, with the same steady ominous gaze into the other's eyes, tried to check his startled ponies, which reared and plunged and sought to break into a run.

Pulling vigorously at the reins, old Chilian Grey kept his face still towards Conrady, and his eyes on him, with a dumb, formidable challenge. Conrady, recovering himself, turned; and Lady Amy saw—such a face! swollen, bleed-

ing, disfigured. Then with a spring like a panther's, he sought to fling himself on the dog-cart, and tear Chilian Grey from his seat. But the cobs with a bound, burst into a gallop; Conrady was flung violently backwards, and after staggering like a drunken man for an instant, stood glaring after his attacker, out of eyes more like those of an infuriated dangerous brute, than a human being.

Lady Amy, with a cry of horror, hid her face in her hands, and moved towards her own door.

At this moment her little page came running out, for he had heard the ponies' bells.

"If you please, my lady," said he, "Miss Glyn told me to stop 'im."

"You cannot," gasped Lady Amy.

"He is gone. But go and tell Mr. Conrady that he may come in and bathe his face, while you go for a fly to take him home. He is just outside the gate. Go!"

The boy ran out, and Lady Amy entering the house, rushed towards Miss Glyn, who was quietly seated at work in the drawing-room.

"Oh, Georgie!" she cried. "You were not at the window—you did not see it!"

"See what?" said Georgie, pausing with uplifted needle.

"That man, that Grey, struck Mr. Conrady across the face with his whip——"

"Did he?" said Georgie, "I am glad of it!"

"*Glad!* Oh, how cruel! He is

coming in — I sent Charles to tell him——"

"Who, Mr. Grey?"

"No, Mr. Conrady. Oh, his face!" with a shudder—"I cannot see it again. Come up in my room, Georgie. It is a sickening sight."

Footsteps and a raging voice were now heard approaching the door.

Lady Amy seized Georgie by the hand; Georgie rising, precipitately upset her work-basket, bestrewing the floor with reels, wax, silks, scissors and needle-cases. Then they fled together upstairs; leaving Conrady to the servants.

It added to Conrady's frenzy that his lady-fair had deserted him! To have her tender little hands bathe his cruelly cut face would have given as much compensation as the case was susceptible of. He did not even have

the attendance of her little ladyship's maid.

It was the *cook*, a large, fat, greasy person, who came out of the kitchen, bringing a bouquet of Lady Amy's dinner with her—applied cold water to his blood-stained visage, and overpowered him with cockney ejaculations and comments.

"Good 'Eavens! One h'eye you are 'ardly h'able to h'open, Sir! It's a 'orrid gash—a h'awful one! It makes me feel squeamish just for to look at it; that it do! And the swellin' is that 'igh h'already!"

Then she applied a diagonal bandage leaving his unhurt eye free.

"I 'ope I don't 'urt you, Sir?"

Conrady muttered an oath; gave her a half-sovereign, and went off to the

fly which had been summoned, and now stood at the gate.

Lady Amy and Georgie watched him enter it from a stealthily-opened corner of the blind upstairs.

Conrady considered Lady Amy's conduct very heartless; and so perhaps it was.

"I should think this would keep him at home for some time to come," said Miss Glyn, in a tone not altogether of dissatisfaction.

"What will he do to this Mr. Grey?" cried Lady Amy, in some discomposure. "He must take some revenge—and it will be a harsh one, if I know his nature. If I am the cause of this, I am sorry beyond words."

"You are the cause, of course—Lady Amy, Mr. Conrady is a basely untruthful man!"

"How do you know that he is?" said Lady Amy, turning on her.

"I do know it. He is capable of grossly false words and deeds; *I know it.* Oh, if Mr. Grey's ponies had only run over me a few nights sooner!"

"Miss Glyn," cut in Lady Amy in a tone of repressed anger, "unless you can refrain from mysterious allusions to this violent and eccentric Mr. Grey, I must beg you to leave the room. I have had quite enough of him. I have even ceased to feel the slightest curiosity regarding him."

"I hear, and obey, my lady," rejoined Georgie bending her head low. "And now I will leave you to dress for dinner. Shall I ring for Burrard?"

"Yes; but stop one instant; do you mean that Mr. Conrady has been false concerning me and my affairs?"

"Yes; that is precisely what I *do* mean."

Lady Amy looked taken aback. "How can you possibly know it?" said she in a low voice.

"I am thoroughly sure of it," returned Miss Glyn, in a tone of the heartiest conviction; and rising, left the room.

Lady Amy sat still as a wax saint in a shrine; her eyes fixed brooding moodily on the floor, their pupils dilated, as though her brain teemed with painful and exciting doubt, with poignant and harrowing uncertainty.

CHAPTER III.

"As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet."

GEORGE BLAGRAVE spent a very bright, white-stone evening at Clematis Cottage.

Lady Amy, in turquoise blue, made a picture that appealed to sense and taste; Georgie all in white, a sweet, colourless study that appealed to his sensibility and his heart.

Lady Amy sang for him; Georgie played for him a floating melody of minor chords.

"It is like a subtle penetrating perfume, that air," said he.

"My mother composed it," returned she with a sad look. "My poor sweet mother."

"Speaking of perfumes," said Lady Amy, breaking the slight pause which Georgie's gently spoken words had made, "I always have a scent to accord with the dress I wear. If it is a white dress, I choose stephanotis or orange flower. If it is rose-coloured, rose-scent. Blue, myosotis. Yellow, jessamine. Grey, heliotrope."

"What a pretty idea; but with black? you often wear a black dress in the evening, though I have never seen you in one in the day time," said Georgie.

"Oh with black, I always wear passion-flowers," answered Lady Amy in a low voice. "Mr. Blagrave," she continued, changing her tone to her usual one of levity, "what shall Georgie wear at the Smallfields' ball? black, with white flowers, or white. with loops of black velvet."

"She must wear white by all means," answered Blagrave looking at Georgie worshippingly.

Lady Amy caught her under-lip between her teeth, and her eye-lids fluttered, as if a sharp pain drove through her heart. Time was, when she had received such looks from the man she loved.

"I have never been at a ball before," said Georgie. "You will be there?"

"I am not a ball going man, in the least; but—yes, I shall go. You are not

to dance fast dances, Georgie; do you mind?

"I don't *now*," answered Georgie laughing; "but I do not know how I shall feel when I hear the valses being played, and watch other people whirling about the room. Won't *you* dance with me?" in a coaxing voice,

"I am afraid I have forgotten how."

"Then practice now," cried Lady Amy springing up and going to the piano. "Move the tables and chairs."

Blagrave, protesting that he had quite lost the art of valsing, nevertheless was instigated by the light in Georgie's eyes to clear a space; and then at the sound of Lady Amy's swinging *trois temps* he encircled Georgie with his arm, and they valsed until both were giddy.

"If it had been I, waltzing in that small space, I should have upset at

least three tables and two chairs," said Lady Amy laughing. "And now, Mr. Blagrave, I am going to send you away. Look at the clock!"

Very fair did the mistress of Clematis Cottage and her young companion look, as they entered the Smallfields' ball-room.

Almost the first person who accosted them, was Mr. Conrady! who with a praiseworthy indifference to appearances, exhibited his face with a blue, red and purple welt across the bridge of the nose, and one eye-lid; and a long stripe of plaister making a diagonal division of his dark cheek.

"You here!" exclaimed Lady Amy, recoiling a little from him as he came up to her.

"Yes, I'm here, cut and all. What do I care for looks? I was bent on

coming," squaring his jaw. "I couldn't resist coming to see you as I like best to see you, in a ball-dress. I was determined to come. How many will you give me?" attempting to take her card.

"Have you seen that dreadful man again?" asked Amy, retaining her card.

"Yes," returned Conrady, a strange, a terrible look coming over his face, "I *have* seen him. Look here, will you give me all the round ones?"

"I do not think I can give you all, by any means. I'll give you *one*."

Conrady's disfigured visage became more disfigured still, as a dark flush suffused it.

"One!" repeated he. "If you mean that—if you really mean that you only will give me one, I won't have any! I don't consider that half a loaf is better than no bread."

"Oh, very well," returned Amy with her mocking smile. "Then *don't* have any. Give me back my card."

He turned a look of savage disappointment on her.

"Is this to pave the way to a refusal of something a good deal more important than a dance?" said he.

"No," she answered hesitatingly.

"Perhaps you're ashamed to be seen dancing with a fellow whose face is in such a state!"

Lady Amy looked down blushing, and with a rather confused laugh.

"Miss Mountjoy, and everybody else you ask, will dance with you," murmured she. Then, looking up. "Mr. Conrady, I will give you two valses."

"Give me ten," said he, looking at her in her satin, and lace and pearls, with a greedy delight.

"I will give you three," returned Lady Amy in a tone of surrender. "Not one more than three. Do not ask me for one more. Three! I've never given any man so many; except"—— she stopped with exceeding abruptness, and bit a lip that quivered with a sudden, nervous irrepressible tremor.

"Look here!" (he generally sent a sentence into the world preluded by '*look here!*') "I don't think you're the thing; you need a change of air; and the season is getting decidedly on the wane here. You ought to go to Brighton with Lady Rosehew. You *are* going, ain't you?" he concluded with eagerness; seeming to wait for her answer with suspended breath. He held her card in his hand, but appeared to have forgotten to write his name for

the dances he had been so anxious to secure.

"Why do you so much wish me to go?" asked Amy with a light laugh, but looking at him narrowly. "Yes, I expect to go with mamma; at least, I *did*. I am beginning to feel rather more uncertain about it, now that I have got Miss Glyn."

The sound of Georgie's name effected a dark and sinister change in Mr. Conrady's eager face; a change so patent, that Lady Amy replied to it by saying:

"You *must* like Miss Glyn. I insist on your liking her."

If a look, compounded of fear and dislike, was a correct explication of Mr. Conrady's feelings towards Miss Glyn, it must be a very marked transition to other milder sentiments towards her.

"Oh, all right! I'm your slave. I'll like her dearly; sweet little—kitten!" returned he, in a tone of ferocious playfulness. "But really, Lady Amy, you do not look the thing. I hope you will decide to go to Brighton."

Lady Amy wondered why his tone of intense desire was so disproportionate to his request. Before she could answer, a number of would be partners surrounded her, and he was forced to stand back.

She and Miss Glyn had dined first with the Smallfields, consequently had been in the ball-room when it held no one but the dinner guests, Conrady, and one or two more. Now people entered in scores.

Mme. de Thomé in gold, and white, and scarlet; Miss Mountjoy in Nile green; the Croftons dressed alike in

blue and white; Mr. Blagrave, serenely grave, and quite the handsomest man in the room.

The ball waxed festive. Women, seated against the wall, against their will, tried not to look bored; men, lounging by the doorways, quite unsolicited to do so, tried to look bored, as hard as they could, and succeeded in looking sleepy, and inexpressibly stupid.

Georgie, thoroughly satisfied, danced time after time with her gifted lover. A great many men, won by her gentle face, her fair abundant hair, and soft grace, would have been glad to dance with her. But with a loyalty to which fortunately she did not have to sacrifice inclination, she declined with an air of smiling gratitude for being asked which went far to soften the discomfort of refusal.

Mrs. Mountjoy glared at her ex-

governess with the look of a person discovering a slug on their salad; Miss Mountjoy, on the contrary, gave her a friendly nod; and her troublesome, injurious admirer, the fresh-faced Claude, begged quite cringingly for a round dance, or "barring that, *any* dance." But with some hauteur, she declined.

By two o'clock, Lady Amy's restless spirit had had quite enough of it; and she took herself and her charge away.

In a pause of one of those three valses, wearied, yet acted on by his importunity, she had almost promised to be Patrick Conrady's wife.

If he was not dowered by Nature with a winning eloquent, tongue, he was gifted with *lignum-vitæ*, obstinacy, and a persistency which had enabled him to carry more than one point in

his life. And Lady Amy, restless, reckless, loving luxury without the power to procure it; stung on all sides by the insufficiencies of her life, yielded to his urgent suit—or rather, half yielded to it—simply as a means of escape from one set of miseries to another.

"Nothing mattered now," she told herself. All that life had to offer was gorgeous externals; a profusion of costly luxuries; a surrounding of splendours that should excite envy, in other, less fortunate (!) people.

No, nothing mattered. She must go on living, some way, somehow. Better to have a life all gilded and gay than any other. Steep the hours in reckless amusement, and extract diversion from everything that was supposed to give it.

Lady Amy had her ball dress taken

off and sent away; then extinguishing her candle, she knelt down by the open window, leaned white bare arms on the sill, and drank in the night air; while the chill splendour of the moonlight bathed her fair face and arms, and burnished her loose, waving hair with its metallic lustre.

Her past life trailed itself along before her mental vision, chequered into fierce contrasts of happiness and suffering, of love satisfied with uncrossed return, and love made mad by jealousy —of days of unalloyed bliss with her newly-wed husband; and of the darker days that followed, when love and jealousy exaction, dissatisfaction, pining unrest for an impossible devotion, drove one to wild words, the other to passionate upbraiding.

"Oh, if I could only live my life

over again!" thought she, her forehead sinking on her arms. "I see nothing before me but misery, misery, misery! I *was* an unreasonable creature; I *did* say things no man could forgive. Oh, my love! Though you have been proved false, I still believe that you are true. There has been something wrong somewhere. I am always bound to you; I shall never be free; my heart is chained to the memory of my only happy days; and I shall never, *never* be free! If I could only take back what I have done! If I could only be Amy Langdon, and not Amy Bellamy!"

At this moment, there came faintly up the silent, deserted street, the tinkle of bells.

Lady Amy started up, and drew back a little, so that she could see without being seen.

The sound of the bells drew near, and nearer, slowly. The ponies that bore them were coming at a walk.

A few moments more and they were opposite the house.

Why did Lady Amy stagger back with a wild cry?

She had seen a face in the moonlight. A face lifted, so that the eyes might rest on her windows, and struck by the silver light, so that every feature was distinct.

In another instant she was leaning out of the passion-flower encircled window, stretching white arms into the moon-lit air; and a word rang out through the profound and sleepy stillness.

"Camille!"

Then again.

"Camille!"

The jingle of the bells ceased suddenly; as Camille Langdon drew them up with a jerk.

"Amy!" he answered, hoarsely.

The outstretched arms made an appealing gesture, though the passion-flower framed face seemed struck into marble.

"Come to me!" said that mute gesture, in a language more potent than words.

He sprang from his dog-cart; he left his horses to go or stay as they chose; he entered the little gate, his hurried footstep rang on the stones. They beat on Amy's ear like anvil beats. The house shook, as with a crash he burst the bolt that fastened the door, and entering, sprang up the stairs, two steps at a time, and entered Amy's room.

She had turned from the window,

and now stood, a slight, white form, dimly distinguishable in the pale light that the moon cast through the window.

She, in her turn, saw a dark indistinct figure enter. She was in *his* presence! Oh, the agony of it, the joy of it, the wonder of it!

He stood before her, not attempting to touch her. Each felt the magnetism of the other's presence, to suffocation.

For an instant there was silence; a pause, that held all the divine mutabilities of the soul.

Still he did not speak, or touch her; his arms hung by his sides; his eyes were fastened on the dim, pale outlines of her familiar figure.

In the dead stillness he heard the passion-flowers and the leaves stir and rustle. There was a faint fragrance in

the air of the room that he seemed to remember.

Then Amy said brokenly.

"Camille!" and with an abandonment of passion and despair, flung herself on his breast.

Not to clasp her, press his lips on her silken hair, would have required superhuman strength of will.

He clasped her to him until he felt the beating of her heart; he kissed her hair until his moustache was entangled in its silky tendrils.

Then he flung her from him, saying hoarsely and low,

"Get away from me! Do not touch me! You are mine no longer. You may belong to any man—but you can never again belong to me! Why!" with a harsh laugh, "it's shocking that I should be here in your room!"

"Do not speak so," whispered she, bursting into wild sobs. "I am in despair! Why did you drive me to it?" Then. "Oh, Camille, I do not care what you have done, I"——

"Hush!" he cried, his hand going up to his temples like a man whose brain is cracking under some weight of misery. "I have done *nothing*, but be my own victim, and the victim of a scoundrel's lies and fraud."

"And that scoundrel is"——

"Is called Conrady!" said Camille from beneath his teeth.

"Ah!" returned Lady Amy, drawing a deep breath. "I loathe him, Camille!" as if a sudden thought flashed into her mind. "Who struck him across the face"——

"*I* struck him across the face," an-

swered Camille in a tone of savage satisfaction.

"But Mr. Chilian Grey?" said Amy in hopeless bewilderment.

"There is no such person."

Lady Amy gasped.

"Are *you*"—— she began.

"Yes, I am Mr. Chilian Grey," he finished for her. "And I have carried out my disguise well. Your little friend Miss Glyn knows who I am. So does *your friend*" (with bitter emphasis) "Mr. Conrady now. They are the only people in Wrode who know it."

"But Trouville?" said Amy, not yet grasping the idea.

"I have never been in Trouville," he returned. "But even if it had not then been too late, I would not have worked with determination to provide counter proofs that would prevent a woman escaping a

thralldom from which she had long wanted to be free."

"That is not true"—began Amy in something of her old manner; but he would not let her go on.

"Amy," he said, seating himself, and drawing her down close beside him, "shall I tell you the story of myself from that day in March when you went to England?"

"Yes; tell me everything."

"You remember that quarrel we had, and the things you said?"

"Ah, yes! I wish I hadn't them to remember!"

"I went to the theatre as you know, in a rage. You also went to the theatre; in a rage, as well, probably. I let you go out alone you remember?"

"Remember? Of course I remember."

"But what is the use of my telling

you!" he exclaimed in a voice of agony. "It is too late; it can do no good now for you to know." He sprang to his feet, but she caught his hand, and drew him back again.

"You *must* tell me," she said, "I *must* hear it all, even if it is too late." She pressed his hand against her heart; and then raising it to her lips covered it with kisses.

"This is horrible," said he, speaking as a man on the rack might. And he snatched his hand away; drawing aloof from her.

"Go on," said Amy, "I can hardly breathe until you tell me."

"I let you go out alone," continued Camille. "I staid there raging at you in my heart, and longing to go with you, yet at the same time rebelling against going——"

"I know the feeling," murmured Amy. "Yes, go on."

"I went to a supper, hating you all the while. The fun was fast and furious, I was making one of my best jokes, when suddenly my mood changed. Nothing reminded me of you; yet in one bright instant the thought of you flooded my mind. I hated you no longer. I forgave every hard word you had ever said of me; I forgot every angry look; I loved you as I had never loved you before. I broke away, and rushed out into the street. It was dawn; the night had gone; another new day had come to live or die in; to suffer or be happy in; to love or hate in. I hoped feverishly that I should live, love, and be happy in it; but on the contrary I suffered, doubted, almost died in it. I went home; laying no importance on

the sight of the open doorway. I went up-stairs; and after a moment of delicious hesitation opened the door of your room. It was like waking out of a hideous dream, to the sense of intense relief of a reality that mocked the dream delightfully. I felt that the future could be made to hold perfect happiness for both of us. I entered your room softly—it *was empty!* I found a chair somehow, and sat there I don't know how long. Afterwards I questioned Marie, and found that you had gone to England. After very little debating with myself, I resolved to follow you; I determined to make any concession; to live anywhere, do anything you liked, so that I should have you again. I told Marie to put some things in a portemanteau for me. Then I shut myself up, and forced myself to my work, as if

my mind was free and unburthened. I felt very strangely; my head sang and swam; my veins seemed to run fire. I went out to say good-bye to Denarié. He was not in. I left a message for him, saying that I was off to England; then I went downstairs into the street, still feeling queerer and queerer; and before I had got twenty yards, chaos, oblivion, dark death, seemed to suck me in. I had fainted, they afterwards told me.

"Some good Samaritans picked me up, and had me taken to a hospital, and there I lay with brain fever—no, Amy, do not cry, do not lay your cheek on my hand—for six long weeks, in the horrid nightmare of one of the most violent of diseases; past present, and future; time, events, intentions reduced into formless nullities by my sick brain. One evening

I remember opening my eyes, after what seemed a period of annihilation, and fixing them for an instant on the white face of a Sister of Mercy who sat beside my bed, a rosary dangling from her attenuated hand. I framed no idea then to myself, of where I was, or even *who* I was. I felt too weak to have an identity even; and my eyes refused to keep open long enough to take in any detail outside that black and white figure and face.

"Weak! Well, I will not tell you what infirmities of emotion, and intention I was guilty of. I believe I shed tears once because I heard a bird singing. Summer had almost come before I was able to take up anything approaching my old thoughts and feelings again, or to clothe myself in anything like my old individuality.

"The doctors told me the illness was brought on by over-work, over-excitement, over-taxing of all my energies——"

"Oh," broke in Amy, sobbing, "it was to make money for *me* that you overworked your brain; it was *I* who helped to worry, and weary, and torment you!"

He shrugged his shoulders and continued,

"After a while, of course, I found myself gradually reclaiming memory of the past; nothing withheld itself from my recollection; and with a sort of fatalistic feeling, I believed that separation from you was so to be; since chance and circumstance had inexorably severed us, giving me no chance to reinstate myself, or begin the happy new future that I had thought of with such visionary delight.

"One day, after I was able to be up, even to crawl a few steps in the sunshine, I thought to send to the Rue —— to see if there were any letters for me.

"While I waited for the messenger to return, I suffered the most miserable alternations of hope and misgiving as to a letter from you. I begged them to have some stimulant within my reach, for I felt it to be more than possible that I should faint at the sight of your handwriting.

"Well, I need not have made any preparation for that *péripétie*, for there was no letter from you. There was one from Lady Rosehew, and a more cold-blooded production, I am bound to say, never came from a woman's pen!"

"Mamma is such a cold-hearted woman," said Amy.

"I don't know that she is colder-hearted than most women," said Camille, bitterly. "But her letter I found odious. In the first place, she told me that she wrote, not only without your knowledge, but quite against your desire. That was pleasant to begin with. Then in most uncompromising terms she flatly ordered me to come to England, that you might not get talked about. Then in calm terms she stated her foregone conclusion that you and I could never be happy together, for she knew as she *had always* known that we were utterly unsuited in every respect to each other.

"The effect this letter produced on me was to determine me not to go to you until you wrote, asking me in fit, and

propitiating terms to come. You were safe with your mother, and I vowed I would not bring my unsuitableness into my mother-in-law's household.

"I never returned to the Rue ——, I staid on at the hospital, taking private rooms in a quiet corner. I settled everything at the Rue —— without going there myself; and every day I sent there for letters.

"There never was one from you. I did not answer Lady Rosehew's letter. Meanwhile my need of money became somewhat pressing. I was not able to originate anything; my brain refused to be the willing slave it had once been. I cast about for a book that I thought might take in England, if translated; and hit on Château Reynard's. Fortunately it took better than I had hoped for——"

"And you sent me a great deal of the money you made by it, you dear, generous Camille," said Amy,

He gently pushed her away again. He realized their position, if she did not.

"Let me go on, Amy. I am making a tremendously long business of this. The book succeeded, as I have said; and brought me in handsome returns. I was made independent; and, moreover, my old working power was coming back to me. With returning health, and capacity for work, and life, came a longing, deep beyond words, intense beyond expression; a longing perpetual, ever present, ever importunate to see you again. I hungered for a sight of you; I was made restless by the pressing desire to rest my eyes on you, to that degree that it interfered with my work.

"I sent for a lot of old Court Journals,

and in one of them I saw that you had gone to Wrode, you and Lady Rosehew.

"Then an idea took possession of me—I don't know what suggested it, or why it suddenly sprung into existence—to see you without your knowledge; to watch you, and discover if I could, whether you missed me; how life was going with you; whether it was as pleasant to you without me, as with me.

"Doctors no doubt, the asses, would say that this was a piece of eccentricity produced by a morbid condition of the brain resulting from my illness, I deny that; it was a reasonable thing to do, under the circumstances, what I did. I transformed myself from a young man into an old one. From Camille Langdon to Chilian Grey. I took a house as near your's as I could get it, and in a street that I supposed you would be obliged to

walk through very often. There I had my wish; I saw you. And a lighter hearted creature than you appeared to be could not be seen."

"I was not—I was not," cried Amy, "I have been wretched!"

"The first time I saw you," continued Camille, without heeding her, "you paused just in front of the house with your friend, Miss Mountjoy, and that accursed Conrady, to look at the ponies which were being shown me—I, invisible, behind my lowered blinds—ponies that have played an important part in my story. After that I saw you daily—sometimes twice a day. Usually you had your dark-faced admirer (it was very easy to see he *was* an admirer), and you seemed not to repel his advances. A pleasant sight for me, was it not?

"Time went on; I had sent directions

to the Rue ——, where to have any letters that might come forwarded to me. No letter from you came, as you know. But one day arrived a notification from a lawyer of the suit you had instituted against me. Desertion, &c., I little knew what I was the victim of. You know all this part of it. How I made no defence; how witnesses jumped nimbly into the witness-box, and gave evidence against me. Hybrid creatures from Trouville; shady Englishmen who had been forced by disgrace into the humiliating shelter of a foreign land.

"I racked my brain to discover why they should thus perjure themselves; I pondered on the fact of their giving Trouville as their abiding place. It was not explained to me until the other evening when Miss Glyn told me that Mr. Conrady had boldly announced that

he had seen me in Trouville. Then the circumstance of the three witnesses was made clear; they had been bribed by him. They were his own bribed liars!"

"Why did you not deny—defend yourself. Contradict—"

"It was too late then, of course," said Camille impatiently. "You gained your case. *Voilà!* Mr. Conrady's mouth watered for you. He did not stick at a trifle to secure you—the hound! But, listen; *you shall never marry him!*"

"Marry him!" echoed Amy hysterically. "I'll die first!"

"Yes," said he sinking his voice into a husky whisper, "you'll die first!"

The moon had set; they were now enveloped in complete darkness.

A melée of emotions caught up Lady Amy's light wits like a whirlwind.

Terror, bewilderment, a strange mad joy, a crushing despair.

There was dead silence for a moment. They heard and felt each other's breathing. Contact was just escaped; but her arm was only a knife blade's distance from his sleeve.

"Why am I staying here!" exclaimed he abruptly. "I must go."

"Not yet!" cried she in a tone of agonized entreaty. "Not yet! for when you go, we shall be for ever divided; oh, what misery, oh what unbearable misery!"

She sprang to her feet like one distracted.

"Light a candle," said he, in the same hoarse low tone, "I want to look at you."

"And I at you," answered she brokenly.

She struck a match; and lighted one

candle; then from it (it was a flat bedroom candle) lighted the two tall wax ones which stood on either side of the glass. The room in a moment was flooded with clear light, that showed out the sky-paper, and the gaudy butterflies gummed to it; the glittering accessories of Lady Amy's dressing-table, the row of little pointed-toed, high-heeled boots, and shoes and slippers; the small unused looking writing-table. All, all had an excruciating familiarity to Camille Langdon.

And Amy herself?

He caught her by both hands and looked into her pale face. The large hazel eyes, glazed now by tears, raised themselves to meet his, like the eyes of some fleet-footed, soft-coated wild animal, that Death has struck, and tamed for ever.

"Do you know that you have done what only one woman in a thousand would?" asked he sternly.

"I know it! I know it!" she answered despairingly. "I have always been more violent, more unreasonable, more hasty than other women; and now I reap the result in a broken heart. Camille, you are very little changed; you are still——"

He dropped her hands.

"You had better not finish," he said in the same hard, stifled voice he had spoken in before. "What is the use to wring my heart? You have brought this on yourself and me by your headstrong, passionate——"

"You forget," she cried in a tone of violent recrimination, "if you had taken the proper steps to clear yourself of the charges brought against you, I might

still be Amy Langdon—still be your wife."

"Delightful," he returned, with an angry laugh, "to have a wife under such circumstances. What a nice, happy pair the world would point us out as being."

"I thought you did not care for the world," said she, the colour leaping into her white cheeks.

"By Heaven!" ejaculated he, laughing loud and mirthlessly. "Here we are on the brink of one of our old quarrels, just the same as ever."

"But you never *will* allow that you are the least in the wrong," said Amy.

"Neither will you."

"I have! I have!" she rejoined, eagerly. "And that is the reason why I think you might admit that you too are at fault."

"No, I cannot admit what I do not consider to be the case. If you were so anxious to be free of me——"

"But why," interrupted Amy, with passionate vehemence, "why did you not write to me, and try to heal the breach? you *might* have done that, you cruel——"

"Why did not *you* write to *me*, and try to heal the breach?" cried he, his vehemence matching hers.

She was silent.

"You were too proud," answered he for her.

"And so too were you," answered she for him. "If one of us only had relented, we might have spared ourselves this wretchedness," continued she.

"Is it really wretchedness to you?" asked he, feigning an incredulous tone.

"It is heart-break," answered she, briefly. "But," with a restive movement, "I am sorry I said that; for I do not believe you care; I daresay you are glad to be rid of me."

"How dare you say that?" laying his hand heavily on her shoulder.

"Because I think it," said she, beginning to sob afresh. "If you had cared for me, you would not have acted as you have done."

"Oh, no; it shows complete indifference to change my identity, and lead the life of an owl, or any other night-bird, so that I might watch you, and torture myself day after day with the sight of the prettiest, most damnably heartless woman in England, who was still my wife!"

"I am not heartless! I tell you my heart is breaking."

"Well, let it break then; it is all your own fault," retorted he, savagely, and taking his hand from off her shoulder, turned on his heel to go.

"No, it's your fault too!" she cried, more piteously now than angrily. "Why *won't* you allow that it is?"

Then taking a step or two after him, like one distraught, she cried,

"Camille! I must see you again! I cannot go on living and feel that I shall never see you again! What is to become of me? What is to become of you? Where are you going? what are you going to do?"

"God knows!" answered he, and opened the door.

"Without a good-bye? Without any taking leave of the woman who has loved you so dearly, who *still, still* loves you,

notwithstanding that the law has divided her from you? Come back, Camille, my own Camille, if only for one moment."

He hesitated for an instant; then closed the door, and turned to her again.

She met him half-way, and flung herself at his feet.

"One kiss!" said she suffocatingly, "if it is the last! One kind word for me to remember until I die; and oh, I pray that death may come and take me soon! For what is life to me now but one long agony of remorse and sorrow?"

He raised her gently, but held her off from him; looking at her as a man may at the thing he loves best in the world, when he is seeing it for the last time.

"Poor little face so pale, and wet with tears," said he with a dreamy tenderness, "poor lovely eyes that have looked such thrilling things at me; they that have flashed with anger, and softened with love—farewell! Farewell, Amy, I shall not kiss you. Nor must you fling yourself on me in this way, for we are for ever divided. But if I feel myself sick unto death (and as you said just now, may that time be soon in coming) I shall send for you, that I may feel your lips on mine, and your arms about me once more. My poor passion-flower, poor storm-beaten, pale passion-flower, good-bye!"

He bent for one silent moment over her young head, and the wildest, most complex emotions raged in his heart.

The dawn broke, and its pale sad glimmer turned the flame of the candles,

and the light they shed to a hot, and garish hue.

The birds awaking, sent forth shrill rejoicing for the day that was being borne. The passion-flowers trembled in the cold morning wind that swept them, and entered the warm and perfumed room.

A moment more, and Camille had gone; Amy was left alone with her unavailing anguish of regret.

She resigned her limbs to the hard floor, as a death-wounded thing might. Her hair strayed over her outstretched arms; the chilly morning air stirred her brown curls.

She lay there, abject, numb, tearless, half stupefied, until the sun was high and hot, the birds dispersed, the day advancing. Then she rose up and pushed the disordered hair away from her pale, tear-stained face.

She staggered to her feet, and going to the door, locked it. Threw herself on her bed; and wished herself dead and in the grave—poor, passionate, hot-hearted Amy! So much to be blamed, so much to be pitied.

When Burrard came to the door with her cup of tea, she sent her away, saying she had a head-ache, and did not wish to be disturbed.

"A 'eadache!" muttered Mrs. Burrard. "I should think so! Such doings was never heard of before by any mortal man or woman either."

So Lady Amy was left there alone in her misery. Even Georgie did not come near her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OBSTINATE ADORER.

GEORGIE, horribly alarmed at the noise of the night before, when Camille kicked open the door, had sprung up intending to go to her friend. But as she opened her own door she saw who it was running up the stairs, and retreated, pressing back, with a word of explanation, Burrard, whose room was behind hers, and who had rushed out in terror.

The other servants had not been aroused.

The morning wore on. Blagrave came and staid until luncheon time.

Lady Rosehew also appeared; staid a few minutes, and departed.

"What a hard little woman she is," remarked Blagrave, as the prim stiff little figure went down the street.

"Yes, she is," acquiesced Georgie, "but I suppose she cannot help it; it is her nature, that she was born with."

"Comfortable and unanswerable argument," said Blagrave.

Lady Amy had some luncheon brought up to her room, and at about three o'clock came down into the drawing-room, where Georgie was sitting, industriously plying her needle, as usual.

She almost started at the sight of Lady Amy, who looked as if the night

had drawn from her all the vitality, hope, joy, of her youth.

Dark circles made her hazel eyes look melancholy, and of an unnatural size. Her face was of a clayey hue, altogether different from its customary alabaster fairness. Her whole aspect was that of a creature robbed of all the satisfaction of life, and made the prey of a consuming sorrow.

She came up to Georgie, and laid her hand on her shoulder.

"You need never speak to me again of Mr. Chilian Grey," said she, with an exhausted quietude. "I know everything you would tell me. I understand everything perfectly."

"You do not wish me to mention him even, Lady Amy?"

"No; never speak his name in my presence."

She sank into a chair, her hands listlessly crossed; her eyes fixed sombrely on the ground.

"Talk to me!" she cried, after a long pause. "Cannot you find something amusing to tell me? Something funny that happened at the ball? *Anything*, anything, to turn my thoughts."

"I heard any number of flattering things said of you, Lady Amy."

"Ah! By men, of course?"

"Yes, by men."

At this moment, a servant was heard going to the street-door.

"I think I saw Mr. Conrady come in at the gate," observed Georgie.

With a sudden exclamation, Lady Amy sprang to her feet, and rushed precipitately from the room.

"'De do," said Conrady, not shaking hands with her, and casting himself

upon a frail, gilded chair. "How's her ladyship after the ball?"

"I do not think Lady Amy is feeling very well."

"Be down presently, I suppose?"

"I do not know. They will tell her that you are here, of course," and Georgie glanced with a sort of horror at his purple, blue, and crimson face.

"How *can* he appear looking so before the lady of his love," thought she.

There was a silence.

Mr. Conrady commenced a yawn; then, finding that it hurt him, strangled it, with attendant contortions fearful to behold.

"Do you stay much longer in Wrode?" asked Georgie, for the sake of saying something.

"I dunno. Long as the place doesn't bore me. Lady Amy is really going to

Brighton with the Countess, I suppose?"

"I do not know."

"Don't you?" said Conrady, somewhat agressively. "*Why* don't you know? Hasn't she told you?"

"No, she has not; and I think for the very good reason that she does not herself know yet."

"Doesn't know yet! Why Lady Rosehew is going in a few days."

"Yes; but I daresay Lady Amy will not finally decide until the night before."

Conrady appeared to ponder something darkly at this.

Georgie went on sewing.

"Look here," said Conrady, rousing himself. "Does her ladyship know I'm here?"

"Yes, no doubt she does."

"Perhaps she doesn't. I want her to come and have a sail this afternoon. You wouldn't mind going up and telling her I'm here?"

"There is not the slightest use for me to go," returned Georgie, flushing a little. "They are perfectly *sure* to have told her."

Conrady gave a kind of dissatisfied grunt.

"Lady Amy needs change of air," he began, after a moment. "She ought decidedly to go to Brighton."

"I rather doubt if she does go," said Georgie, seeing that for some reason or other he was very desirous she should go. "What she needs is rest; and that she will be far enough from having at Brighton."

He gave her a look that plainly said, "What do *you* know about it?"

"And that's what you tell her, I suppose?" said he disagreeably. "That is, if she allows you to give her advice."

"I have not told her yet," said Georgie, with admirable calmness. "But I *will*."

"The fact is, I suppose you don't want to go yourself!" said Conrady.

Georgie paused in her work, and looked at him steadily for a moment, without making any reply.

Conrady fidgeted; got up and prowled about the room; returned to his former place. Fought with another yawn that his lacerated muscles rendered torturing.

"Would you like to look at Punch?" asked Georgie, feeling somewhat sorry for him.

He was listening intently to a faint sound, which probably he thought might

be the forerunner of Lady Amy. He waited until it had completely ceased, and brought no result; then he turned his head slowly in Georgie's direction, saying with an insolent carelessness.

"Beg pardon, I believe you asked me a question just now, and I didn't answer it; the fact is I'm troubled with absence of mind——"

"Yes, I know you are," cut in Georgie quietly, and folding her work with neat precision. "*Permanent* absence of mind."

She rose to her feet as she spoke.

He stared at her in silence; his mind slowly absorbing the sting of her words. Then he muttered something under his breath.

She, meanwhile, walked out of the room, and went up-stairs.

Lady Amy's door was closed; she

tapped softly on it; but receiving no reply, passed on, and entering her own room, shut herself in; smiling to herself at the idea of Conrady being left to his own devices in the drawing-room.

She drew a chair up to the open window; and taking the little blue-bound volume containing her lover's poems, seated herself with quiet, thorough satisfaction.

It was very still; the gardens which her window overlooked lay basking in the mellow September sunshine. In the distance sparkled the sea; a white sail or two dotting its lapis lazuli expanse. Sweet, fresh odours were wafted in to her, and she heard the soft, distant cooing of ring-doves.

Alternately reading and musing, she sat there steeped in a pleasant calm.

Sometimes she looked at her ring, with a happy light irradiating her face.

She had glided into her engagement with a sunny smoothness; her future lay before her, sweet and fair; she was young, and much loved, and she felt within herself the power of winning friends if she chose.

Yes, she was very content; very satisfied.

But as she thought of Lady Amy, and compared the workings of each of their minds at this very moment, the contrast seemed almost too sharp and strong; for she knew that Lady Amy was enduring the keenest anguish any one can know.

The thought of her poor little friend and protectress, drove its former peace from Georgie's mind.

Only on one thought, in regard to Amy, did she rest with tranquillity. Conrady would never have her as a wife; of that Georgie felt certain.

All his houses, and yachts, and horses, and jewels, would not buy her now; of that Georgie was convinced. But what would become of this obstinate adorer? How would he bear the slip 'twixt cup and lip?

At this moment he was fuming and fretting in Amy's bonbon-box of a drawing-room.

Twice he had got up and laid his hand on the bell; twice retreated without ringing.

At last, becoming furiously impatient, he did ring.

"Does her ladyship know I'm here?" asked he of the "Buttons."

"Her ladyship is asleep, Sir, I think," was the reply.

Conrady snatched up his hat, and rushed out of the house tempestuously.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CHILIAN GREY.

LADY ROSEHEW went to Brighton, unaccompanied by her daughter.

Georgie imagined she knew why Lady Amy still lingered in Wrode; and conjecture was changed to certainty in the course of a few days.

Hellmuth Lodge was in the market again. The mysterious Mr. Chilian Grey

had taken his departure—whither, no one knew.

The sound of his ponies' bells had never again penetrated to Lady Amy, as she sat listening for them in her drawing-room, or crouched by her bedroom window waiting for them with a wildly beating heart.

"Georgie," said she, one day after she had walked past Hellmuth Lodge, and seen the placard "To Let" actually in the window, "what do you say to joining mamma at Brighton? I think I am getting weary of Wrode. And it is such a bore to be perpetually dodging and avoiding that Conrady."

"I love to hear you call him 'that Conrady,'" said Georgie, with a mischievous smile. "Only fancy, he has not seen you once since the Smallfields' ball?"

"And you have not minded giving him perfectly glaring, transparent excuses for me?" said Lady Amy, listlessly.

"Not a bit; on the contrary, I have thought it rather good fun," said Georgie, laughing, "for you know he detests me quite as much as I detest him. I am only afraid, so persistent is he, that he will follow you to Brighton."

"I am tired of life," said Amy, with a despondent sigh.

For a moment, an impulse moved her to make a confidante of her gentle-mannered, sweet-faced friend; to tell her all the yearnings of a spirit whose outlook was over a misspent past, an unsatisfied present, a miserable and blank future. To tell her how wrecked and forlorn she felt, notwithstanding that her actions seemed to prove her reckless,

and all too frivolous to gain the respect and esteem of men.

But though impulsive and rash of speech, she had the reticence that springs from pride, and it was not a necessity with her to impart the sorrows of her heart as it is with some women; moreover, a confiding spirit had not been cultivated by Lady Rosehew, who had never courted her daughter's word-trust, or sought to probe her girlish heart.

The impulse passed, Lady Amy rousing herself to speak in a tone of animation began sketching for Georgie the life they would probably lead in Brighton.

"But, dear Lady Amy, you sometimes look so tired and worn," answered Georgie tenderly, "what you need, I think, is rest. Not constant excitement."

"Rest!" echoed Amy bursting into a laugh. "There is no rest for me, except in the grave! No, let me find what amusement and distraction I can in the gaieties and excitements of life. Two glasses of champagne will sometimes make one feel almost as light-hearted as one wishes to appear. Why do you shake your head, and try to look so mournfully, severe child?"

"Because I am beginning to hate the sound of the very word champagne," answered Georgie with determined truthfulness. "And I had rather see you drooping and sad than gay, because the foaming stuff mounts to your head."

"Oh! the doctors are all telling us to take Champagne if we feel low," said Lady Amy, flushing a little, yet speaking carelessly.

"Yes," returned Georgie, "and so

they are advising chlorals and chlorodynes, when we have neuralgia. I am sure I wish you had kept to your quaint cure of brandied peppered toast, instead of drugging yourself into that dreadful heavy sleep from which I could hardly wake you the last time you had neuralgia."

"Don't malign that sleep," said Lady Amy rising, "it was delicious; it brought a complete forgetfulness and rest that I have not had for many and many a long day. Then it is decided that we go to Brighton on Tuesday. You will like to tell Mr. Blagrave?"

"Yes, I think he will come then for a short time."

"Think he will! Of course he will," said Lady Amy with an envious laugh. "Georgie—" with a swift change of tone, "I forbade your mentioning the

name of Mr. Chilian Grey to me; but tell me this—do you know where he is gone?"

"No," answered Georgie, "I have no idea."

Lady Amy seemed to set her little white teeth together, as she muttered to herself, under her breath, "if I knew where he had gone, I should go to that place too." Then aloud, and in her usual manner, "Good-bye, Georgie, I will not take you from your work—especially as it is for me to wear! How beautifully you are doing it."

She bent down for a moment to examine the wreaths of passion-flowers that Miss Glyn was embroidering on black tulle, and then went forth to take a solitary walk.

She had not gone far when she saw Gertrude Mountjoy coming towards her;

looking—thanks to the arrangement of draperies—like a fish walking on its tail. She had a hat with a wide brim put rakishly on one side of her head, and she approached with her unfading smile on her lips.

"Does she smile in her sleep, I wonder?" conjectured Amy. They happened to meet opposite Hellmuth Lodge, which was a spot quite à propos to the subject just then absorbing Miss Mountjoy's attention.

"Oh, Amy," she began at once, "do you know what they say of that man who used to live there!" nodding over towards Hellmuth Lodge.

"I have heard a great many silly things about him," said Amy turning pale, but speaking quite steadily.

"No, but the last thing?"

"How can I tell?" said Lady Amy impatiently.

"Why they say he was not an old man at all, but a young man dressed up to look old; that his beard was false, and his wrinkles painted. Yes, they say he was handsome and young. We don't know what dreadful creature we may have had among us. A murderer, forger, we don't know what! Why how pale you are! How nervous you must be, to be frightened at such a thing as this! He is gone now—vanished; there is no more fear of his stealing the spoons, or shedding our blood."

"Have you heard where he is gone?" asked Lady Amy eagerly.

Her friend started at her in astonishment.

"I believe Penty said she heard he had gone to France. But he is not in

Wrode, so you need not be alarmed, Amy."

"I am going to Brighton though. At least I think a little of joining mamma there. To France; does that mean Paris, I wonder?"

"Does *what* mean Paris?" asked Miss Mountjoy, looking more and more surprised. "Oh, you've gone back to Mr. Chilian Grey! I really don't know; and why, in the name of all that's queer, should *you* care to know?"

"I *do* care to know," answered Amy shortly, "and if you have no objection, Gertrude, I will make your house the object of my walk, that I may ask Penty."

"Have you lost anything? jewels—silver?" inquired Gertrude, a ray of enlightment illuminating her face.

"Yes," answered Amy, a little gleam

of amusement darting into her eyes, "I've lost something." The bright look died suddenly away, leaving her eyes more melancholy and weary looking than before.

"I'll turn back with you then," volunteered Miss Mountjoy, "and you must come in and have some tea; Mr. Conrady and several more people said they would come."

Lady Amy consenting, they walked on together.

On entering the house, Amy threw herself on one of the hard hall chairs.

"Let me see Penty, Gertrude dear," said she coaxingly. "Have her sent to me here!"

"Oh, very well," said Miss Mountjoy, thereupon had her maid summoned.

But no addition to the information given by Gertrude was derived from Mrs.

Penty, who returned to the housekeeper's room affixed to the idea that Mr. Chilian Grey had burglariously entered Clematis Cottage, and walked off with some of her ladyship's valuables.

With a moody, disappointed look, Lady Amy entered the drawing-room, which she found full of people, drinking tea, laughing and talking. Amongst the rest, Mr. Conrady, who was like an excited pointer at the sight of her; his position taking an intense rigidity, and his face turning full towards her, while his eyes ate her, as she sank on the end of the sofa beside Mme. de Thomé and drew off her right hand glove.

He managed to be the one to hand her her tea, notwithstanding that Miss Mountjoy, with laboured playfulness, motioned him away with one elbow (her hands being occupied by the cup destined

for Amy) saying, "no, no, you are here to be *ornamental* not useful, go away, ornament," giving him a look which she intended to convey the idea that she found him as beautiful as a drowned Leander.

"I an ornament!" said he bluffly, "that is a fine notion. Look here, I'll take that cup." Which he did, with a determination that nearly robbed it of its contents. "Over my dress!" muttered Miss Mountjoy, turning away with a look which counteracted the last tender glance.

Mme. de Thomé rising opportunely (as he thought) and moving away, her long train carrying Lady Amy's right hand glove on it, he took her seat, with an air of vehement satisfaction, anything but mirrored in Amy's cold, averted face.

"You've treated me like a *dog!*" said he in a guttural half whisper.

"That old saying ought to be put on the shelf, now," replied she with a faint laugh, "for to be treated like a dog, is to be treated with sacrifice, adoration, and unreasonable devotion."

"Well, that is the reverse of the way you've treated me; exactly the reverse. Dog or no dog, you know what I mean. Do you realize that you told me at the Smallfields' ball enough to send me into a seventh heaven of happiness, and that you haven't permitted me to see you since, though I have tried every hour, every place."

"Mr. Conrady," said Lady Amy with icy coldness, "I take back what I said to you at the Smallfields' ball; you are to be kind enough to consider that I never said

one word that I did say, for I take it all back."

A silence. Mr. Conrady looked as if he would have been glad to bite a piece out of his cup.

"You madden me," said he slowly. "After giving me every reason to suppose that you would consent to be my wife, after making me happy with a gorgeous sort of happiness such as I never had in my life before, to take it all back, turn the cold shoulder on me — it's heartless, devilish cruelty. No, I will *not* consider unsaid, what you all but promised me that night at the Smallfields'; I will *not* let you take it back; for if ever a person meant anything they said, *you* meant what you said to me then."

"But I had a complete revulsion of feeling when I got home. Do you

know what I said? I said I would rather *die* than marry you!" She now turned her face towards him, and fixed on him a glance of mingled scorn and detestation.

A mahogany-coloured flush suffused his battered face; his dark eyes seemed to grow more prominent; his lips twitched as he asked,

"Who did you say it to — Miss Glyn?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Amy, hurriedly, "did I say I *said* it? Oh, if I did, I meant that I said it to myself."

"You did say so," responded he, grimly. "You'd rather die than marry me, eh? That's what you say to me now, is it, after those sweet things, those pleasant things you said to me in the Smallfields' conservatory. I don't believe you quite understand what it

is for a man like me to set his heart on having one particular woman for his wife, or you wouldn't play fast and loose with me in this way; you would not give me happiness only to rob me of it, and make me feel desperate. Lady Amy, I want you to abide by what you said to me in the Smallfields' conservatory."

His breath came quick and fast; his looks were charged with dangerous passions, his hands seemed to tremble. But Amy, again turning her face away from him, as if the sight of him was obnoxious to her, replied low and steadily,

"I repeat it; I would rather die than marry you."

He did not answer for a moment; she heard his agitated breaths come and

go. In an instant he said—seeming to articulate with difficulty,

"And I would rather die than *not* marry you!"

He started up as he finished speaking, and putting a momentary control upon himself, as he made his way among the groups of people, strode through the room and went out of the door without a farewell to anyone.

Lady Amy watched his powerful form with a look of repulsion, in which blended something of fear.

In a short time she took leave, and went her weary way homewards. Desolation, self-reproach, unsatisfied longing for what was not, her companions.

She crossed the street that she might be on the side of Hellmuth Lodge, and as she passed the gate, she laid her

hand on the handle, with a tender, caressing motion.

"His hand has often touched it," thought she. "Dear hand, that I must touch again, or I shall die! Yes, without him I must die! I cannot live with the agony that tears me now."

Her dimpled chin sunk upon her breast, a deep sob shook her. Wearily, wearily, she went on her way.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGE OF PLANS.

"GEORGIE," said Amy, an hour or two later, as they sat opposite each other at dessert, eating bonbons, and crystallised fruits, "I want you to go to Paris with me instead of Brighton."

Georgie looked up startled for a moment; then she answered quietly,

"Wherever you choose, Lady Amy;

but I do not think September is a very pleasant time to be in Paris."

"But you do not in the least object to going?" cried Lady Amy, eagerly. "What an engaging girl you are! You never make a fuss about things, or raise objections to be beaten down by my temper; you are a treasure!"

Georgie smiled without answering. She was shrewd enough to know that where you yield to peoples' every caprice, and never combat their most unreasonable desires, they are sure to think you a treasure.

But gratitude, admiration, affection, and perhaps a girlish liking for the sad romance of the thing, prompted her to give a ready yea to Lady Amy's suggestion.

"My spirits rise," cried Amy, get-

ting up impetuously. "Do not let us wait until Tuesday; let us go to-morrow. We will go to Southampton and take the midnight boat for Havre —shall we?"

"There is no reason why we should not. Burrard and I can pack everything easily in an hour or two."

"Oh, Georgie, what a blessing you are to me!" cried her little ladyship, embracing her friend impulsively. "Now Burrard will first be struck dumb, when I tell her; and then will put on injured, victimized airs enough for a martyr. You are so different."

"But I don't feel in the least injured or victimized," returned Georgie, laughing. "Of the two I think I had rather go to Paris than Brighton."

As George Blagrave's ring was heard, Lady Amy flew upstairs to have her little

scene out with Burrard, leaving the lovers alone together.

Blagrave hardly liked this sudden change of plan; but as in his own mind he was fully determined to have Georgie very soon all his own, he did not distress her by needless opposition. On the contrary, he was kind enough to offer to go over to Southampton by the nine o'clock boat, and get them a cabin for their exclusive use, that they might not be relegated to that abomination the ladies' cabin.

"But why has Lady Amy suddenly decided to go to Paris, Georgie? To get away from Conrady and his devotion?"

"No, hardly that. Poor Lady Amy, she is restless and miserable. There is hardly a night that she can sleep without taking something to soothe her

nerves. Don't you see how white and haggard she is looking, poor, pretty darling?"

"Then, notwithstanding all that has taken place, is she still held by the 'feverish and romantic tie?' I remember vowing to myself once that I would never subject myself to its bondage; you are to blame for making me break my most heart-felt resolutions."

With the unconscious egoism of a lover, all subjects strayed through their various channels into the predominating one of his own love.

"You will soon join us in Paris?" she said imploringly, as he rose to go.

"Of course I will. In a few days," clasping her in his arms. "And now, good-night, my 'smile amid dark frowns,' my 'gentle tone amid rude voices.' Sleep

well; and if you dream, dream of flowers and the faces of children; of birds with their fluty songs, of peaceful green glades where little brooks go singing——"

"Dear, I had rather dream of *you*," interrupted she, softly, and with a tender smile.

He murmured a lovely something in her ear, and with a long kiss they parted.

CHAPTER VII.

PURSUIT.

"NOW we have cheated Mr. Conrady!" cried Lady Amy, and her laugh rang out gaily. "I believe he had made profuse arrangements for a month at Brighton. Horses and carriages, servants, dogs, and a steam launch! I cannot understand a man having so little self-respect, as to pursue a woman who he knows, hates him."

They were seated on board the boat bound for Southampton. Blagrave was with them, but was having a cigar forwards, smoking being interdicted aft of the funnel.

"But, remember," Georgie ventured to say, "you have not always hated him, or seemed to hate him——"

"No, indeed!" interrupted Amy, colouring, and biting her lip. "I almost—almost——"

"Promised to marry him?"

Lady Amy nodded.

"Poor man!" said Georgie, meditatively. "I am not surprised that he should still cling to what he felt at one time was within his grasp. But I don't know why I call him *poor;* for I feel no compassion for a treacherous, lying knave—and that is what he is. Nothing better! I am glad you have cheated

him. He deserves to be cheated!"

Lady Amy said with equally angry energy, "Yes, he does." And then the friends relapsed into silence; looking at the yachts that still skimmed over the sunset reddened waters; looking at the green and peaceful shores with smoke curling here and there above the massed malachite-coloured foliage, or the grey walls of quiet homes nestled in emerald tufts of shrubbery and trees.

They touched at Cowes.

Cowes wore a disconsolate, desolate appearance. One or two figures in blue serge still sauntered on the Esplanade; a few yachts still rode at anchor, and cut the cool late September sky with their delicate masts, and light tracery of rigging. The cottages fringing the shore looked unlived in; the hotel balcony that six weeks ago had been gaily

draped with flags in honour of some thrice-noble sojourner, was now left to its bare, faded green rails; the windows opening on it, over whose threshold historic feet had stepped, and through whose panes a world-known face had looked, were now tight closed.

The green, as they slowly steamed past it—going very close, for the tide was high—boasted still a few perambulators, nursery-maids and children with sun-tanned legs and wooden spades.

Blagrave saw them safely on board the steamer for Havre—Burrard already beginning to put on a sea-going face—and after they were fairly off, returned to the hotel and sought his rest, which did not come until he had pondered long and deeply on everything connected with his love and Lady Amy, and himself.

He wished he had managed to go with

them, they seemed such a helpless pair to be wandering about with no other protection than a maid.

Why was Lady Amy so suddenly disposed for Paris? Could it be possible that the husband who was no longer hers, still drew her magnetically to him.

Did this fiery-natured, rash, reckless young thing, who from her first entrance into society had been a by-word for her wild impulsiveness, did she bitterly repent the irretrievable length to which she had gone, and yearn with the despairing yearning of a wrecked spirit for the man she had for ever lost?

He recalled her face as he saw it last. There was a hungry look in her large brown eyes, a feverish tremor about her dry, scarlet lips. As she had once flung herself into the furtherance of a division from Camille Langdon, was she now

insanely striving to effect a meeting which could only have all the sorrow of a parting.

It was necessary for him to be in London the next day and the day following, then he determined to go to Paris directly, that he might watch over the girl who was to be his wife, and also find out if the poor noble little wildling had gone to look upon the face of her lost lover and husband.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CREATURE OF IMPULSE.

PARIS! City crowded with memorable associations to both the young creatures, whose lives circumstance and fate had so strongly linked together.

Lady Amy's first act was to fly off alone to the old place in the Rue ——. How familiar it all looked! The great doors stood open; the September sunlight lay warm and red on the stones; the cat

sidled out of the concierge's little den, and rubbed its head confidingly against her dress.

"Is Mr. Langdon living here?" demanded she of the old man, who pushed up his spectacles and stared aghast at her question.

"No; he had not seen M. Langdon since he went away in March. Settlements of rent had been made; and effects removed through a stranger. The apartment Miladi and Monsieur had had was now let to an American lady."

This was the disappointing all the concierge had to tell. Lady Amy turned away more full of mad disquietude than before.

She did not ask herself why and wherefore she let her desires tend towards another meeting with the clever and

handsome husband she had sacrificed to her own jealous and unruly temper. She did not attempt to reason with herself as to a desire so futile, a longing so vain, so contrary to the fitness and order of things.

She longed for the sight of Camille's face, for the sound of his voice, for the touch of his hand, as a withering flower might long for dew or rain, a ring-dove for the coo of its lost mate, a homesick child for its mother. She did not try to show to herself what a strange figure she would cut in the eyes of the world by this attempted violation of an irrevocable fiat.

She reasoned with herself about what she was doing, hardly more than her favourite passion-flower reasoned with its tendrils about what they clasped.

The tendrils of her heart stretched

towards Camille, after ramping on the ungraspable ground till they were long and strong. Love seemed to have accumulated in her heart for him during those bitter and angry days, weeks, months of separation.

What should she do next? Go to Denarié whom she had always detested and treated with studied incivility? she felt that she could not bring herself even to write to him, much less to ask him where Camille Langdon was.

She determined to beg Georgie to write for her; leaving her out of the question altogether. Georgie's devotion would stop short at nothing, save what conscience thoroughly disapproved, in order to oblige the woman who had befriended her in her hour of need.

She entered the hired coupé and bade the man return to the little hotel where

they were stopping. She gazed out on the brilliant crowded streets and boulevards with a sickened sense of self-disgust and blame.

What a fool she had been! what fools they had *both* been! for she would not exempt Camille from his share of the folly of pride and ill-temper which had wrought their mutual misery. What would she not have given now to have the past few months swept out of being, and to regain the position which had cost her such a strange mingling of infinite misery and unhappiness—that of Camille Langdon's wife.

They went through the Faubourg St. Honoré; perhaps the most familiar of all the streets to Lady Amy. The sight of it drew from her burning tears of regretful recollection.

In that shop they had gone together

many a time to buy flowers. Late summer, and earliest spring flowers.

Its windows boasted roses still; and stephanotis, tuberose, gardenia, jessamine, myosotis, and many more. Paris must have flowers in all seasons.

She remembered the February violets that were the last flowers he had ever brought her. Pale Parma violets, with their scent as celebrated as the renown of a conqueror king.

Yes; the perfume of the shrinking little flower has as grand a notoriety as the splendid deed of a splendid soul, as undying a fame as the death of a hero; a wider spreading popularity than that of Croizette or Thérésa.

She leaned towards the window of the coupé, and looked at the array of flowers.

"Qu'elle est belle, cette dame là!" said a man to his friend, as they issued from

the florist's door. "She looked at the flowers as if they were her dead sisters!"

If to be deprived of what gave life and sweetness made relationship, then Amy could claim sisterhood with the cut flowers, dying slowly in water or moss.

She had not been back long, before she put on her most wheedling tone, and said to Georgie.

"Georgie, I want you to write a letter for me to a man here in Paris. When I say for me, I do not mean that I am to appear to have anything to do with it——"

She stopped short for a moment to collect herself; for her heart was beating quick, and her breath coming and going unevenly.

Georgie, who in default of having any needlework to do, was curling a feather of Lady Amy's with the edge of a

card, paused, and looked at her friend searchingly. "Well?" she said suggestively.

"I want you to write to a man here in Paris, whose name and address I will give you, asking him if he knows where — Camille Langdon is," said Lady Amy, hurriedly, and with an effort.

Georgie started; and each regarded the other with a guilty sort of look.

"I am to write as if *I* wished to know, Lady Amy?"

"Yes, Georgie, if you will be so kind."

Amy evidently had no idea of permitting the grass to grow under her friend's feet before she wrote; for she quickly placed before her a blotting-book with a blank sheet of paper

ready to her hand, an inkstand and a pen, and, further, immediately provided her with the name and address of the man to whom she was to write.

Georgie dipped the pen into the ink with an air of docile obedience; then paused with the pen suspended over the paper, and an uneasy, uncertain look stealing all other expression from her face.

"Ought I to do this?" said she, low and distressedly. "Ought you to care where he is, or to know? Suppose you do find out; what then——"

Lady Amy interrupted her by catching both her hands in her own, while she looked at her with a glance fired by overweening desire.

"I don't care about what I ought or ought not to do, or say. I never

have cared, never shall care! I only know this — that I must and shall see Camille Langdon again. There is no use in disguising from you that I am wretched; you see that I am. Write the note, Georgie, and then I will tell you the story of my life. Why should I not trust with it a girl who is so willing to devote herself to me, as you are. Simply write, child, in French, that Miss Glyn presents her compliments to M. Denarié, and would be very glad if he would have the goodness to give her some information concerning M. Camille Langdon. His present residence, if possible. That is all."

Georgie quickly wrote what Amy dictated, and handed it to her to read. The note was directed and despatched; notwithstanding that Georgie felt all the time a prey to secret misgiving.

What she had before suspected, now loomed a close reality. Lady Amy had come to Paris in the hope of again seeing Camille Langdon.

The note gone, Amy seated herself nearer Georgie, saying,

"You should thank Heaven, child, that you have a sweet temper, a temper perfectly under your control. A bad temper is the modern wicked fairy's life-destroying gift to a baby-girl. My temper has wrecked my life. I began, as a child, by being violent and unruly to a degree that would have appalled any mother but mine. She was so cold and calm that nothing a child could do was able to stir her. After one of my first wild fits of rage, she locked me up in the spare bedroom—poor spare bedroom! poor little me!" Lady Amy paused to shudder, laugh,

and cry all together at the recollection. "When I had been considered punished long enough, and was let out, the room was a wilderness of broken glass and china, and torn down curtains, and upset chairs — *I* was a bleeding little object with hands that breaking the looking-glasses had covered with long cruel cuts. Failure number one of punishment. So it went on. All my naughty furious fits met with punishments, all the punishments were failures. Well, Georgie, not to bore you, I will skip over all the time, until at a certain ball in town I met the deep blue eyes of a stranger fixed on me, with a look that seemed to draw all my heart, all my soul to him. This stranger soon ceased to be a stranger to me. He got an introduction to mamma and me; I did prodigious things in the

way of managing and finessing that I might meet him, see him often. Mamma, like a little wall of stone, stood between me and my resolution. For my resolution, when I found he cared for me, and after he had asked me to be his wife, was to marry him. I beat down mamma's stony, cold determination, and married Camille Langdon. For a whole month I was happy, perfectly happy."

She paused; her eyes fell, her whole face was transfigured by a retrospective glow. Then, the tide of her past life seemed to overwhelm her with an emotion too deep to find an outlet in expression to another.

She moved away, and seating herself at the window, leaned her chin on her clasped hands, and looked down on the turbulent life below, without seeing that on which her eyes rested. She never

finished that promised story of her life to Georgie. But what was there to tell? except to recapitulate a long list of needless quarrels, delicious mendings of a peace that would not go twenty-four hours, perhaps, unbroken. To tell of hours of angry silence, and moments of angry speech, succeeded by corresponding hours and moments of happy, wordless love, and sweet loving words.

Alternations, grim in their relentless bearing towards the future, however stormily full of love they had been in the present. For who could deny that over all those chequered hours of impassioned quarrels and tempestuous recriminations, Love still reigned?

They were passionate souls; and they ordered the course of their true love turbulently.

And this was the end! It would not have been the end had each possessed a serener spirit. Violent action, as the corollary of violent feeling, would not then have been necessity to each.

And Amy sits high up at the window, staring down without seeing it, at the crowd of Paris. Camille, who has lost her for ever, where is he?

Wherever he was, M. Denarié did not know.

The answer to Georgie's note brought simply his acknowledgment of complete ignorance as to his quondam friend's whereabouts.

Without comment, Georgie handed the note to Lady Amy, who in her turn, read it in silence, and then tore it up.

After a moment's pause, she said, frisking her fan with a giddy air,

"Meanwhile — *il faut qu'on s'amuse!* Let us go to the theatre to-night."

"You and I alone, Lady Amy?"

"Yes; why not? The last night of my life, I remember, I spent *all—all* alone at the theatre."

Georgie looked at her in startled concern.

"Sweet, my Lady, do you think what you are saying? 'The last night of your life?' It is not a disembodied spirit that I see when I look in your direction, but a charmingly pretty creature with bewitching Russia leather shoes on, and a deep russet coloured gown that matches the shoes."

As Georgie continued speaking, Lady Amy's face relaxed from the wild hardness that had given Georgie a momentary pang.

"I repeat," said she more quietly,

"the last night of my life; for I have not really lived a moment since then."

"Do not let us go to the theatre to-night," said Georgie gently. "Let us drive out to the Bois about five this afternoon, and spend the evening quietly. Is there not some one for whom you could send—"

Amy sprang up, chafing under anything that savoured of dictation. "I do not wish to be bored," she said, "I wish to be amused. If you do not choose to go to the theatre with me, I will go alone."

"Oh, you must not do that!" cried poor Georgie. "You know, Lady Amy, that I am under your commands; of course I will go with you, is it not my duty—and pleasure?"

"Pleasure came rather tardily," re-

joined Amy bitterly. "And I hate to hear you make prim little speeches like that."

"Strange that my loving heart should so mistranslate itself!" exclaimed Georgie in a tone of self-reproach. "My lady fair, I hope you believe that I would do anything for you, go anywhere with you—and not from a sense of obligation, but because I love my love with an A, which is Amy!" she ended with one of the childish laughs and gestures that she sometimes was betrayed into; and still laughing, knelt down by Amy's side, took off one of the Russia leather slippers she had spoken of a moment ago, and kissed its slender, scented toe.

Lady Amy laughed too, but it was a tender, *real* laugh, most unlike those airy, mirthless trills that betokened no

joy of the heart. She playfully snatched her slipper away from Georgie, and replaced it on her foot.

"Let us get Burrard, and all three go and *flâner*. Do you like to *flâner?* I love it."

"And so do I," answered Georgie, getting up from her lowly position and skipping off. "I'll tell Burrard, shall I?" Then *sotto voce*, "I know who I wish was going with us!"

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. FREKE.

THEY all presently sallied forth together; and Lady Amy said no more about going to the theatre.

But it was so to be, that she fared on amusement in Paris. Two or three acquaintances found her out; and thus it came about that when George Blagrave arrived and sought his sweetheart, he found that she had gone to a pic-nic

at Versailles. As he had an aunt whose home was in Paris, but who, of course, always spent the summer months elsewhere, he immediately went to her apartment in the Avenue ——, and discovered that she had returned from Switzerland only two days before.

She was seated in a kind of ivy bower, in her small salon, near the open window.

He remembered the floral conceit, which his aunt had imitated from one seen in the house of a friend in Sweden.

Mrs. Freke issued forth, and clasped her handsome nephew in her arms.

"I am to congratulate you, or scold you with my tongue, instead of my pen! This is really a surprise, George! Have you come all the way to Paris expressly to see me? And so you have engaged

yourself to a little nobody? Now, of course, you will say she is lovely, graceful, and so on. But *don't*—because I've already seen her! She is rather a nicé looking little fair thing. Yes; I'll allow, if you like, that she is pretty. But only pretty. However, I will confess that when I saw her, I had not my best feelings on; and that makes a difference. George, take her away from that fast, reckless little woman, Lady Amy Bellamy."

"Why, Aunt Freke, I thought that Lady Amy was a great friend of yours!"

"Oh, we were tolerably friendly in other days, when she was Lady Amy Langdon, and *all right*, with no necessity for explaining her away. I violently object to having people at my house who have to be explained away."

"I should never take the trouble," returned Blagrave, coolly.

This was the aunt from whom he had large expectations. She was a fair, tall, well-dressed woman, with a cleft in her chin, that gave to her middle-aged face almost a look of youth.

"Why had you not your best feelings on when you looked at sweet Georgie Glyn — *my* Georgie Glyn?" he continued.

"Because she *was* your 'Georgie Glyn!' and also the companion of a woman in a very equivocal position. How I regretted your choice! I could have found you twenty suitable wives——"

"Thanks, I'd rather have *one unsuitable* one," remarked Blagrave, drily.

"George, you understand the *spirit* of my words, though you do pretend to

misunderstand the letter." Then she laid her hand on his arm, and looked searchingly into his face. "Is it a *real thing*, my dear? Are you sure that it may not be simply a passing fancy?"

George's eyes shot a fiery glance of reproach into hers.

"She is soon to be my wife," he answered simply, and withdrawing himself from her touch.

"Then, George," said Mrs. Freke, earnestly, "take her away from Lady Amy Bellamy; do not let her share in that reckless little creature's conspicuousness; do not let her be drawn along in Lady Amy's headlong career! I met them both last night at a Mrs. Lunts'—and Lady Amy made herself the gazing-stock of the room, by her eccentric dress, and wild excitable manner. You

must take the girl away from Lady Amy!"

"But what then, Aunt? She has lost both father and mother, as I wrote you; and the only relatives she has in the world are living in Smyrna —which is a long way off, you must allow. Will *you* take her?" he ended, after an instant's pause.

Mrs. Freke pondered a moment. If she could have assured herself that her nephew's engagement was but a temporary entanglement, she would have given a decided negative, and left Georgie to Lady Amy and her fate. But exhaustive knowledge of George's character, forced her to believe that when he said "she is soon to be my wife," he sealed it with determined fixity of purpose.

"Well," she answered slowly. "Here

I am alone—and if she is really to be your wife—perhaps I should consider it my duty to take her. I will not refuse, George; but before I say yes, I must know her a little; bring her here to see me."

By way of thanks, her nephew, with a gratified look, raised her hand, and pressed his lips on a variety of precious stones that loaded her long white fingers.

"The question now arises, will she leave Lady Amy?"

"Surely if she cares at all for you she will!" said Mrs. Freke, in an exclamatory fashion which she meant to impress George strongly with a sense of Miss Glyn's utter unworthiness, unless she yielded to her lover's wishes.

"But she is devoted to Lady Amy——"

"Ah! But what about *you?*" inquired Mrs. Freke, with caustic emphasis.

Blagrave waived the question.

"Georgie is as true as steel," he recommenced.

"To you, or to Lady Amy?" inquired Mrs. Freke smiling.

"To both," he answered curtly, and an angry glitter brightened his eyes.

"I will tell her, aunt, that I infinitely prefer her coming to you. But I shall not urge her to leave a woman to whom she owes so much, as she does to Lady Amy, and over whom her influence is so good and so powerful. And now tell me of yourself? How have you got on this summer, all right?"

Mrs. Freke had a great deal to say on the subject of her summer travels; and it was not until just before Blagrave

rose to go that they reverted to the subject of Miss Glyn.

"I do not promise to take her, George," said Mrs. Freke cautiously. "I have never in all my life rashly involved myself in awkwardnesses. Bring her here soon though, and let me see what I make of her."

"Pray have your best feelings on," suggested Blagrave, smiling, yet inwardly nettled, "when I bring her—or she comes; for if you have, you will not fail to like her; and if you have *not*—why—you would not like perfection itself. Good-bye. You dine at seven?"

"Yes; but you might as well come here altogether. Bring your portmanteau with you."

"No; I think on the whole I had better stay at Meurice's, many thanks all the same."

"Oh, you young men of the present day," said Mrs. Freke (who by the way was quite a 'present day' woman herself, and brandished no obsolete prejudices). "You flee away from under the roofs of your female relations, as if Interference or Restraint were painted over the door of your room, as Catholics sometimes have a saint's name, or Jews a Hebrew inscription."

"Having 'Restraint' in letters of fire over my door would not restrain me much, I can assure you," answered her nephew, laughing, "any more than the name of a saint would make me pious, or a Hebrew inscription which I couldn't read"——

"George, that is what is so objectionable in you. You never will follow the *spirit* of my speeches to you."

"Oh, yes I do, aunt," said George

making off, "when there is any to follow," he added to himself, and disappeared.

He repaired for a second time to the hotel where his love was stopping. It was between nine and half-past; his aunt's dinner was perfect enough to make even a poet conscious of a post-prandial blandness.

It was with a vivid sense of delight to come, that he was shown into Lady Amy Bellamy's sitting-room, where a hub-bub of voices, a fragrance of blended flowers, perfumes and wines jarred on the senses, that were anticipating more spiritual, more subtle pleasures.

Lady Amy was seated beneath the flare of the gas, in a brilliant dress of two or three contrasted colours, talking with joyless excitability and volubility

to a mob of men who surrounded her, and gave her a somewhat too pronounced applause of laughs, and "By Jove" garnished comments.

Georgie, all in white, was in a corner near the open window, hemmed in by a chair on which a man was seated in the position of a lady on a side-saddle; poor Georgie had a half-distracted, half-frightened air, and looked at her vis-à-vis friend with much distaste.

There were only two other ladies besides Lady Amy and Georgie in the room, neither of whom Blagrave knew.

There was a bowl full of champagne-cup upon the table; various bottles and glasses; fruit, cakes, ices.

Blagrave greeting Lady Amy made his way instantly to Georgie's side, and clasped the little hand with a long clinging

grasp, that seemed to say how much warmer this salutation would be if it could.

The man, riding the chair woman-fashion, kept his position manfully; Blagrave, to stay near Georgie, was obliged to stand by her, *affiché* to the wall. But ere long both escaped to a corner still more remote, where they had each other undisturbed, and could talk low, happily, perhaps not very sensibly to one another. Their soft half-tones, full of feeling and the sweetest reality of life, sounding through the loud artificially gay voices, and forced laughs from Lady Amy and the others, like a bird's fluty song in the midst of a jangled barrel-organ tune.

How strange a pot-pourri of conversational bits is!

"What a pity I cannot kiss you; but there is a pure harmony about you in that white dress, that caresses my gaze," said the poet lover to Georgie.

"Worth is a good creature; he sent me a little white silk jacket all beautifully quilted to wear under my last costume, a *present*; he didn't make me pay for it," said one of the two ladies, a tall woman with a very deep bass voice, tragic black eyes, lantern jaws, a jolly turned up nose, and wide lips, curling perpetually into a burlesque of a smile.

"Allow me, Sir, to disagree with you about Lucile; she is as straight in my opinion as a yard of pump-water," observed one of the gentlemen (an American) to another, *not* an American, who being young, and not well furnished with self-control, went off into a fit of laughter at

the strange construction and wording of his friend's speech.

"Well, I thought she stooped," was his reply.

Just now, a servant entering the room, approached Miss Glyn and handed her a note, which she in her turn, after glancing over it, gave to Lady Amy, who without ceremony read it.

On dispersing, various plans were discussed for to-morrow and many days after. But in these bright projects Lady Amy did not join.

"You will go to Fontainebleau to-morrow, Lady Amy?" said the tall dark woman, shaking hands for good-night.

"Sorry, Mrs. Lilmark, but I can't. I have unexpectedly been obliged to change my plans; I must go back to England to-morrow."

There was a universal outcry at this. Lady Amy it seemed was deep in engagements; all of which would be thrown over by her abrupt departure.

"What was that note, pray, Georgie?" asked Blagrave in a low tone, "and why was it brought to you? for something makes me feel that it has made Lady Amy come to this sudden decision."

"No doubt it has," answered Georgie, "I will tell you all about it to-morrow."

The other people gone, George Blagrave found himself alone with the two friends, for they were really friends now.

At a moment when his eyes were turned away, Lady Amy caught Georgie's glance, touched the note lying on the

table with a swift gesture; then laid her finger for an instant on her lip.

Blagrave staid until weary looks bade him go and leave the two to seek their repose.

CHAPTER X.

LOYALTY.

BEFORE going to the Hotel, the next morning, Blagrave sought his friend Denarié, whom, alas! he found in the same ignobly exalted position *au cinquième.*

In the course of conversation, Denarié fished out a note from amongst a heap of papers, and tossed it over to Blagrave with a laugh, and a somewhat slighting comment on the writer, of whom he had

never heard before. It was Georgie's note!

Blagrave read it; the colour suffusing his face; then handed it back to Denarié. *Handed* it to him, did not lay it down on the table, for he wished to fix a glance that he knew would impress and augment the effect of his words.

"I am engaged to the young lady, the writer of that note," he said, with slow emphasis. "And I wish you to believe what I *know*, Denarié; that that note was written at the instigation of another person who really wished to find out what Miss Glyn does not care a fig to know—the whereabouts of this Langdon."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Denarié, bending down his head, and grasping the tops of his ears, with a vehemence of gesture only attainable by a French-

man; while his eyebrows and shoulders went up as only a Frenchman's can. "Pardon an imbecility on my part, which was one of the most *mal-à-propos* imbecilities ever committed!"

"Of course, I must pardon you, because you spoke unguardedly, not knowing how it was," answered Blagrave, mercifully; then quickly changed the subject, and cutting his visit rather short, went away to the Hôtel ——.

As he had hoped, he found Georgie alone. There were unequivocal signs of a hasty departure about the room.

As Blagrave hurried forward to get at Georgie and take her into his embrace, he kicked over two bandboxes, and two parasol cases, which were standing on the floor.

Georgie was trying to find amongst a vast quantity of keys, the key to

a travelling-bag she held in her hand.

At the sight of her lover, she started up; the keys fell down with a jingle.

"You are not actually going back to England to-day!" he exclaimed.

"Yes we are; we are going to Brighton," answered Georgie.

"Georgie, see here," said Blagrave, taking her hands in his, and looking at her steadily. "You must not let your devotion to Lady Amy get you into false positions; I have just been shown a certain note that was written—innocently enough — to not one of the most scrupulous of Frenchmen; and I do not think you would have quite liked the remark he made about it; I am sure *I* did not."

"Oh, me!" cried Georgie, biting her

lip. "Did he keep my note, and does he show it? What a silly creature he must be!"

"Was the note you got last night from him?" demanded Blagrave, his tone changing from gravity to sternness.

"Yes."

"And what was in it."

"I can't tell you; I promised Lady Amy I would not tell anyone."

"I cannot allow this," said Blagrave, releasing her hands. "These secrets and compromising actions; I am disgusted with Lady Amy that she should sacrifice you to her own mad ends! She *must* be mad really! Well, I think I can guess pretty well what was in the note; but, Georgie, the fellow didn't write anything to *you*, actually, did he?"

"Oh, no," answered Georgie, readily. "Not a word."

Blagrave took her hands again, saying,

"I want you to come with me to see an aunt of mine who lives in Paris. She is a dear old soul; I wish you to like her. And, my bonnie love, she will probably ask you to come to her."

"*Come to her!*" interrupted Georgie. "You do not mean come to live with her?"

"Yes, I do. And you will go?"

He tightened his pressure of her hands, and his gaze grew eager and earnest.

"Leave Lady Amy? When only this morning she told me that I was a comfort, and blessing to her, and she believed Heaven had sent me to her?

George, dear George, do not ask me to leave her!"

"But I do most emphatically ask you to leave her. It does her no real good to have you with her, and it does you real harm in many ways. Of course I want you to leave her and go to my aunt. Lady Amy Bellamy is a pernicious person for a young girl like you to be with; any man would be in a fever to get his heart's darling away from her! Say you will go to my aunt, love!"

"She has not asked me yet," said Georgie, temporisingly.

"But she will."

"Then I must refuse," answered Georgie, looking into his stern face imploringly. "I love Lady Amy; my heart went out to her the first time I saw her—the day she sent for me to come in——"

"Then the fact is, you prefer Lady Amy to me," said Blagrave, letting go of her hands for the second time, and speaking with concentrated feeling.

"Oh, don't speak to me so, I cannot bear it!" cried Georgie, clasping her hands and pressing them against his shoulder. "Prefer her or any one to *you?* You know better than that! Do you forget what I have said to you? Such things, that I almost blush when I think of them. Life without you would be desolation. George, dear, dearest darling, look at me as you did last night, and tell yourself that I love you!"

"I had rather *you* would tell me so," he answered, relaxing somewhat, "and, moreover, that you would tell me so in

the language of actions as well as of words."

"George, I wish I knew just how angry with me you would be if I did not go to your aunt!" said Georgie.

"I don't think *angry* is at all the word; I should be disappointed in you, and hurt with you for placing Lady Amy first; it would, of course, show how you valued me."

Tears rose to Georgie's eyes, and fell on the keys, which she had picked up and was absently playing with.

"You will rust those keys," said Blagrave, after a pause, and smiling a little.

Georgie, with great docility, took out of the most coquettish little black velvet pocket, her pocket-handkerchief, and dried away her falling tears.

Blagrave, suddenly leaning forward, kissed her cheek's smooth roundness where the tear had glittered gem-like.

"You are all obedience, docility, and pliability, apparently; yet how you can hold on to your own resolves! But, *Alouette*, you havn't resolved to thwart me, and stay with Lady Amy, have you?" Before she could answer, he added, as if further to sway her. "Consider still another thing. If you leave Lady Amy, most likely she will go to her mother, which is the right and proper thing for her to do, instead of flying over the world with you."

"Lady Amy cannot get on with Lady Rosehew," said Georgie; then with an air of innocent pride, "*I* can get on beautifully with Lady Amy! She

says I am the first person who ever thoroughly understood her."

Blagrave smiled grimly.

"She is fascinating, no doubt, your Lady Amy, who you say so tranquilly 'can't get on' with her own mother; but she is not a model for you to follow, nor a woman for you to live with. Surely, surely, her influences will steal over you, and change you from a thing sweeter than a half-opened rose-bud, to a thing hardly as sweet as the same rose, with every petal widely flaring open and ready to fall."

"Oh, George!" said his little love, reproachfully. "In my eyes, Lady Amy can hardly do wrong; and then to hear you——"

"The fact is, that you have for her a young girl's first romantic friendship. Now, Georgie, listen. Put on your

bonnet, and come to my Aunt's with me, instanter. And as we go there, I'll see if I cannot make you yield to me."

"I wonder if Lady Amy——" began Georgie, but something in her lover's face checked her.

She went obediently and got ready, and in a few moments they were on their way to Mrs. Freke's.

They found the lady scribbling notes and letters, with birds singing around her in a way that would have maddened a more earnest scribe.

"Aunt," said Blagrave, "here is Georgie, who has come to see you."

Mrs. Freke took Georgie's outstretched hand, and looked approvingly at her dimples, and the cleft in her little chin. For in her youth, Mrs. Freke's dimples and cleft chin had had many flattering things said of them, and it made her

at once incline kindly to this young possessor of her own whilom charms.

She talked to her very kindly. The interview between them was all that could be desired; but Blagrave, who on the way hither had not been able to extort the desired promise from Georgie, dreaded the moment when his aunt should propose, with the suave graciousness that seems to take an acquiescent reply for granted, his gentle little love's leaving a woman who was apparently fast drifting on the rocks of social disesteem, and coming to her, whom the world held in all approval and honour.

"Miss Glyn—or Georgie, as I must learn to call you," (passée dimples on the part of Mrs. Freke; hey-day dimples on the part of Georgie.)

Blagrave knew what was coming.

"Georgie, you must come here and be with me, my dear. You will, will you not? Instead of taking that trunk of your's, which you say is packed for England, to Brighton, (I think you said you were going to Brighton) you shall bring it here, dear; and you shall have a room with an ivy-bower in it like this one, which you admire so much——" She paused somewhat abruptly, for Georgie was beginning to shake her fair little head negatively.

"You are so kind!" said she, in her tender voice. "So kind, that all the grateful thanks I can give you do not seem half warm enough, nor strong enough, heartfelt though they are. But I cannot leave Lady Amy Bellamy to go to England alone. Desert her! and after all her kindness to me! and loving her, as I do! No, I could not; I

should despise myself for ever. I must go with her."

Mrs. Freke's face assumed an offended, aggrieved expression.

"You know Mr. Blagrave's opinions on the matter," said she with cold indignation; "and his views are mine. I consider it—*disastrous*—to a young girl to live with a woman like Lady Amy Langdon—I *beg* her pardon, Bellamy."

"I am very sorry," answered Georgie, softly but steadily. "I think it kind, and sweet, and good of you beyond words, to have asked me—but I cannot leave Lady Amy. If I could feel that she would not miss me, that she would not mind about my leaving her, I would come with heartfelt pleasure." There was not much rapture in the poor child's tones hard as she tried to infuse

it into them. "But she *would* miss me, she *would* mind my leaving her—"

"In fact," cut in Mrs. Freke, drily, "you consider it your mission to stay with her."

Georgie looked appealingly at Blagrave, who had not spoken a word during this encounter of women's wills; all his words were spoken; he had nothing to urge further than what he had already pressed on Georgie's acceptance.

"No, oh no!" faltered she. "Do you not see—that I *ought* to stay with her?" she lifted two imploring eyes to Mrs. Freke's face as she spoke.

"I am probably wanting in discernment—but I *cannot* see it," said Mrs. Freke, coldly.

Georgie rose to her feet.

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand. "I am sorry beyond words

—but I think I see in your face that you *know* and *feel* how sorry I am!"

"I don't think you see anything of the kind," said Mrs. Freke, relaxing into a smile. "If you see anything of what I am feeling (which you do not; for I am not in the habit of betraying my feelings in my face,) you see surprise and regret, that you should disregard the wishes of—of—George, and place him in a secondary position of importance."

"But I don't!" cried Georgie, with sudden fire and passion, and running to her lover's side, she took his hand, and pressed her lips on it. "He is always first."

"Oh, very well, we will have no more words on the subject. Must you go?"

"Indeed I must."

She left Blagrave, and again held out

her hand to Mrs. Freke, who looked scrutinizingly into the fairest, most guileless of all faces—and somehow found herself imprinting a kiss on the downy, childish cheek. Georgie, impulsive and responsive, threw her arms round her; tears came to her eyes, making them look gem-like and touchingly deep and tender.

"I wish—I wish—" she began; then checked herself, and with a last good bye, left the room followed by Blagrave.

They got half way down the stairs, when he said suddenly, "Go slowly, Georgie; I'll overtake you; I'm going back for a minute."

He rushed back into his Aunt's room. Mrs. Freke had retired into her bower, but emerged on hearing her nephew's footstep.

"Aunt," said Blagrave breathlessly, "what do you think of her?"

"You haven't given me time to think of her," was the reply.

"I shall see you again to bid you good-bye," recommenced he hurriedly, "I am going to England with them."

"George, I do not understand how you can——"

"And I do not in the least wish to be understood," interrupted he. "I never did care to be understood!" and with that he rushed out of the room, as abruptly as he had entered it.

CHAPTER XI.

CONRADY'S DEFEAT.

IT is four o'clock in the afternoon; and Brighton has flung itself in the gayest attire out into the streets; or rather into the King's Road, which is crowded with people, walking up and down in the garish white glare.

A mail phaeton, so remarkably well horsed and appointed that every one turns to look after it, drives at a some-

what brisker space than the usual one down the thronged thoroughfare.

It is Mr. Conrady's mail phaeton; and he is driving his horses awkwardly but well (if the union of those words is admissible) up and down, up and down looking with intense eagerness, from time to time, at certain ladies who happen to be somewhat small and slight of build.

His eyes evidently search for some eagerly hoped for person, and are withdrawn from each mistaken identity with rueful disappointment.

Ten days has he been on the watch for Lady Amy Bellamy, and ten days has he experienced disappointment. He is savagely conscious of having been "*sold*," as he would say. And he is a person whom to "sell," is to gain for an enemy; for he is as implacable as his face and manner pronounce him to be.

Presently his eyes light on a figure whose similarity to Lady Amy's provokes renewed, redoubled thrills of expectancy and anticipation.

The lady is walking slowly along on the side next the water; she has on some heavy ivory white material embroidered with deep purple flowers around the edge; beside her is a fair-haired girl in black, somewhat taller than herself.

She and her companion attract the long looks which some women like receiving, others dislike.

They draw nearer; Conrady pulls up his chafing chestnuts—yes, there is no doubt about it now! It is Lady Amy herself.

In another moment he has stopped; sprung out; told his groom to take the horses home, and with eager steps shortens the already short distance separating him

from the woman of his choice, and love.

For he loved her as only men of his composition are capable of loving; grossly, intemperately, and in vehemence of passion making up for a possible—nay, probable, lack of constancy. He loved her madly.

The hideous cut across his face was now healed, although the cicatrice yet remained. But on his inner self dwelt an ever abiding unhealed wound.

He held out his hand to her, dumbly; the fair companion he quite ignored.

"Here—at last!" said he in a moment with a gap between his words.

"Yes," answered she, in a manner as airy as it was cold. "I suppose I am what may be called *here*. What a scrubby, cockney set you all are here at Brighton!"

"Thanks!" said he, rage and rapture tearing him at one and the same time.

"But look!" returned Lady Amy laughing, "are they not a queer set, even for Brighton?"

"It is only October, remember," he said.

Lady Amy shrugged her shoulders, and did not trouble herself to make any reply.

They walked on in silence until they were opposite the Norfolk Hotel, when Lady Amy stopped for an instant, and giving him a sidelong bow of farewell, and a frigid good-morning, prepared to cross, slipping her hand within Georgie's arm.

"Are you at the Norfolk Hotel?" asked Conrady eagerly; in his heart vituperating Miss Glyn for her innocent presence.

"No," said Lady Amy calmly, and turned short off from him. In a moment he was left alone, and she was crossing the crowded road with reckless coolness; a most frightened person, in the shape of Miss Glyn, following her.

Conrady stared after them for a moment; his eyes seeming to protrude as he watched them; a dark flush turning his face the colour of an earthen crock. Then he walked on, and missed very much a walking stick, wherewith he might have thrashed his trouser-leg, or poked violently into the ground, which which would have been a great comfort to him.

"But she can't help meeting me all the time;" muttered he to himself. "I'll get at the truth—I'll have her yet! How nice she looked! By Jove! Stunning. A fellow would have no end of

pride in introducing her as 'my wife' to some other fellow! Little beauty! Little thorough-bred beauty! It only needs a half a glance to see that she is a thorough-bred; that's the way a woman ought to be. *No 'is she, or isn't she'* about it!"

Lost in ruminations of Lady Amy's perfections, he almost forgot those imperfections of conduct and speech towards himself, that most men would judge marked a coming era of slight, indifference, and disdain.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MEAN-SPIRITED PLEBEIAN.

"THE worst of it is, that I cannot shake him off; he is like a gad-fly!" said Lady Amy to Georgie, as they entered a house not far from the Norfolk Hotel. "I daresay I shall meet him to-night. Well," —in fiery accents—"I'll snub him heartily, cheerfully, decidedly; so decidedly that if he persists any longer in forcing himself

on me, he will prove himself a mean-spirited plebeian."

"I think he has proved himself that already," said Georgie, quietly, as she moved about the little depressingly gaudy lodging-house room, and tried to arrange things in such a way that one need not derive pain from looking at them.

"Ring for tea, Georgie, please. I see mamma crossing the road in her dear little prim way, as if she were not a bit nervous; and she is not. Mamma's nerves are not near the surface like those of other less fortunate people."

Lady Rosehew in a few moments entered the room. She had come to have tea with the daughter who had arrived last night.

She was dressed in a more juvenile manner than had been her wont; and

seemed to have settled down with a stoical composure under the burthen of Lady Amy's unfortunate fate.

"Amy!" she exclaimed, "you are *not* looking well! I thought this morning that it was fatigue, perhaps. But I see now that you are looking very poorly."

Lady Amy's face would always be somewhat of a childish type; for her eyes opened in a large and innocent way, and the delicate contours of chin and cheek were rounded youthfully. But now her face looked like that of a child who is deformed, perhaps; suffers constant pain. There was a pathetic and wistful gaze in her eyes, as of one who has suffering for a faithful foe.

"Oh, I am very well," answered she, carelessly. "Pour out the tea, please, Georgie. Now don't talk of me; I want

to know who are here, and what is going on. By the way, I intend to show you how well and strong I am, by rushing off at once to the Keith's to-night. They have a 'small and early.' Miss Glyn is going too," she added kindly.

"I had much rather not go," demurred Georgie.

Lady Amy crying sharply,

"Nonsense!" She said no more; but listened to Lady Rosehew unfolding calm narrations of the joys and miseries, the successes and failures, accidents and self-inflictions, misfortunes and misdeeds of people, which she had heard since she saw her daughter. At six, precisely, she rose up, and took her departure.

Shortly afterwards, Blagrave, who had submitted with a noble disinterestedness to Georgie's decision, came. He

was to dine with them and accompany them to the Keith's.

They left him reading a review of one of his own books; Georgie, as she left the room, tried to tell by his expression whether it was a good one or a bad, but failed to discover from his half-smile and knitted brows which of the two it was.

Thanks to her own sweet face and winning ways, she fared tolerably well at the dance. But it was with pain and grief that she observed how society, as represented by this small Brighton gathering, appeared to intend treating her admired and loved Lady Amy. A few fawned on her; many coldly avoided her.

Men gathered about her; yet if she was any judge, they were not the best men in the room.

She found it in her heart to wish that

Lady Amy did not laugh quite so ringingly, talk quite so excitedly.

She watched with eager, almost breathless interest, the entrance of Conrady, and his movement to her side. Would *he* see that Lady Amy's future set did not promise to be at all the most desirable one? or was he so blind in his love-seeking that he would fail to observe it?

She studied their faces with acute interest; her lover being at the moment beside her, understood her, and did not speak to her for some little time; leaving her to draw almost certain inferences from the two faces she watched. Lady Amy's pale, disdainful, repelling—probably matching cold and unequivocal words of dismissal — Conrady's darkly flushed, wearing a look of malignant disappointment and heart-crushing failure, mingled with another expression so venge-

ful, that Georgie felt her heart beat the faster for only being an outside observer of it.

Had she been able to hear what passed between the two, the words would have carried out the impression that their accompanying looks conveyed.

"Lady Amy Bellamy," Conrady had begun, seating himself in a determined way beside her, and bending upon her his prominent eyes, that for the moment were fed by anger with the light they usually lacked. "Lady Amy Bellamy, I am an obstinate fellow, and I am a true Briton, seeing that I never see when I'm beaten——"

"'A true Briton seeing that you never see when you're beaten?'" answered she, quoting his own words with a slight insolent laugh. "Really, Mr. Conrady, I am afraid I am too true a Briton to

understand a sentence spoken in such extraordinary English!"

"Don't ridicule me!" he rejoined, "I know I don't know how to talk; and I don't care. I leave it to scribblers, school-teachers, and such like—"

"To people, in fact, who, whatever their other deficiencies may be, at least have brains," returned she, with a calmness, and smoothness which she intended should rob her words of any seeming intention to affront.

"You will find," said he slowly, and fixing a look strangely compounded of love and anger on her face, "perhaps you have already found, Lady Amy, that small as my amount of wit may be, it is enough to serve my own ends."

"Quite enough," she retorted, looking full at him for the first time; and it was a look of such thorough contempt

and detestation, that the lids of even his bold eyes flickered and sank beneath it.

"Quite enough to serve your own ends; and what honest straight-forward and honourable means you take to gain your own ends, Mr. Conrady."

"What do you mean?" said he, blusteringly, "what on earth do you mean?"

"Oh! it is too late for this sort of thing," she answered with careless scorn. "Much too late for pretences of any sort on your part now, since one of your hired false-witnesses has betrayed who it was that bribed him to swear to seeing what he never did see."

For a moment he was silent; the joint of his jaw showed through his cheek near the temple, so hard did he clench his teeth together.

"Whatever I did," he said, "it was you who gave me—the what d'you call it—initiative. I took my cue from you; I led up to your lead simply—"

Rage surged in Lady Amy's heart; but controlling herself, she asked quietly,

"And now, let me ask, what have you gained?"

"I intended to gain—*you!*" said he in a tone of passionate regret. "Lady Amy, I ask for the last time—have I any hope? Or is it all over between us?"

"I deny that anything but acquaintanceship ever existed between us, to *be* '*over.*' But from to-night, I wish you to understand that our acquaintance is at an end."

"As you choose," he said, in a voice so low and muffled, that his words were hardly intelligible. "You seem to find

pleasure in saying that to me. Perhaps I too may have the pleasure of putting to an end—"

He stopped short. The pause, and the look accompanying it, were fraught with a more savage and grim significance than a plain utterance of wild threat, or malignant plan would have been.

The colour that anger and excitement had brought to Lady Amy's cheek died away.

He noticed the ebb of the wild-rose glow, and smiled like a satyr.

"You do not ask me what I mean," said he slowly.

"No; because I do not wish to know. Fortunately, I have hitherto had very little experience of men who deal in base deeds and dark threats; and I wish no explanation given to words that you meant should frighten me."

"My hate and my love are both strong as Samson—" he began.

"I do not feel the slightest interest in people's emotions," interrupted she, gathering up her fan and handkerchief as if about to move away.

"You need not go," said he, "for I am going, Lady Amy Bellamy And I carry away with me the wherewithal to destroy not my own life, but lives of —others, if they take what I have been on the very brink of possessing—"

"I advise you," said Lady Amy, looking with distinctly marked aversion at his livid face, and purple, twitching lips, and the blue remnant of the cut Camille's horse-whip had made. "I advise you not only to leave me, but to leave the room, and the house."

He started up with a fierce smothered

exclamation, and did, indeed, leave both room and house.

"Hateful Brighton!" exclaimed Lady Amy, as she and Georgie drove home together. "It will always now be associated in my mind with a disagreeable scene—the most disagreeable ever a woman had, I think."

They were alone, in the hired brougham.

"But is it the end of him, so to speak?" asked Georgie eagerly.

"It ought to be, after what I said to him. Please say nothing more about it to me."

Georgie, who had the sweetest forbearance always with the other's petulance and passion, sank back silently into her corner and said no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

" And was not this enough?
They met, they parted."

THE following morning (one of Brighton's lime-lighted, eye-torturing mornings, when the sunshine seems preternaturally white, yet bright) Lady Rosehew and her daughter rode off together for a gallop over the Downs, leaving Miss Glyn at home, armed with that woman's weapon which can never be admirably superseded—the needle.

Lady Rosehew's figure looked almost as youthful in its fine slight lines, as her daughter's; and she was as glad of a good gallop with the breeze in her face, and a springy turf under her feet, as when she had been twenty.

By mutual, tacit consent, both mother and daughter avoided speech that might vex, or irritate, or sadden either.

They rode through the streets laughing and talking to one another as if no weight of crushing sorrow, no burthen of defeated aims, hopes, desires, lay heavy on their heart; nor as if they had ever said the cruel things to one another that even mothers and daughters say, when ungovernable temper is aroused, and the fiend of quarrelsomeness invoked. They had both been sorry enough afterwards. Heaven knew! And a time might come when one would be sorrier still.

Oh, bitter, heavy time when the ears that have received suffering through our hot, hasty words, are deaf for ever to the cry for forgiveness which comes too late! oh, black, hopeless time, when eyes that have mirrored our looks of anger and rebellion are curtained by death's grey film, and can no more see our blinding tears of remorse and regret.

The mother and daughter reached the Downs, and their horses sprang fleetly over the dry, elastic turf.

As usual people in hordes were on their way to see the Devil's Dyke, and people in hordes were on their way back from having seen it.

Lady Amy, who for some moments had been very abstracted and had kept her eyes on a horseman far, far in front of them, suddenly ejaculated to herself, more than to Lady Rosehew.

"It is he!"

"He! Who?" asked the other sharply.

Lady Amy's sole rejoinder was to cut her horse's flank, and dash off as if O'Shanter's witches were behind her, and in pursuit of her.

She tore on at racing speed; her horse's feet making dull thuds on the cracked, dry turf.

Cockneyism, which loves nothing better than to give an unflinching stare, now gave it at her (it is one of its few tributes to society!)

"Good Heavens!" murmured poor conventional little Lady Rosehew. "Always electrifying one! One can never be prepared for what she will do next!" and wondered what the groom from the livery stables would think of it.

Follow her, she would not, for all the world; except with her eyes. She can-

tered quietly on, and watched her daughter's lovely figure taking her horse's pace with perfect accordance.

Where was she going? Of whom was she in pursuit? Who was that *he* that had caused such eager looks, such a vibrating, soul-stirred tone? Thoroughly mystified, Lady Rosehew could only watch her daughter's swiftly retreating figure. In front of her were two men also mounted; but she could not distinguish who they were.

Lady Amy rode madly on alone; the men side by side were riding at a great pace too.

Smaller, and smaller grew the lady and her horse, the men and their horses had diminished until they were hardly more than dark moving specks. Then an undulation of the Downs intervened between those whom Lady Rosehew watched and

her own straining eyes. She saw them no more.

Lady Amy found herself gaining on him of whom she was in pursuit; he and his companion had slackened their speed, gradually their horses' gallop died into a canter, the canter into a trot, the trot into a walk.

Lady Amy's horse, meanwhile, was getting nearly spent; for though one of the best the livery stable boasted, it was not equal to emergencies demanding staying power, and its wind was nearly gone, as it came close behind the two horsemen—one of whom was Camille Langdon.

Gladly, gladly now would Lady Amy have retreated; for she felt uncertain of her own emotions, and a 'scene' before a third person was a thing that she knew Camille would hold in special odium.

She was about to pull up her horse, when that too much tried animal drew attention to itself by suddenly changing its breathing to a terrible roaring; while it protruded its head and seemed to eat the air like a spent racer.

Camille and his companion both turned to look at the cause of the lamentable equine sound; Camille's pale skin turned paler as he saw who rode behind him.

Meeting his glance, the wretched wife's face grew like snow that the moon shines on; she swayed for a moment in her saddle, then the faint and dizzy sensation left her; pride upheld her, and she sat calm and firm.

"Ride on, Oliver, I'll overtake you," said Camille hurriedly to his friend.

Oliver rode on, asking no questions, betraying no untoward curiosity.

The husband and wife who had met

last in the silence and solitude and darkness of a summer midnight, confronted each other in the sunshine and solitude and silence of midday.

For they were alone, except for the retreating Oliver. All round and about them stretched the Downs; their short, dry grasses shivering in the strong wind that swept over them, and receiving the golden sunlight on sharp little faded spears. Dense stretches where no grass grew, allowed the sunlight to be warm and ruddy on their arid bosom. Hurrying clouds shadowed distant vistas of green and grey, with ever changing, irregularly shaped silhouettes.

He rode his horse close to hers.

"Amy!" he said in a low voice of pain. "Have you been following me?"

She bent her head in assent.

"And did you come here because you knew, or thought that I would be here?"

"Yes!" was all she said; but it had meaning and passion that would have sufficed for fifty words.

"And I," returned he slowly, "came here because I heard that you would be here. I wanted to see you——"

"Did you?" she interrupted, laying her hand on his. "Did you, my own? oh, Camille, 'want' is a weak word for me to use! I longed, hungered to see you again!"

"Why?" asked he, with the abruptness of roused emotion. "What good can it do? unless—" he grasped her hand with nervous force, "unless you repeal the law's sentence—given because of lying testimony, gained by the king of selfish, cunning knaves—unless you repeal that sentence, Amy mine——"

"Camille!" she cried, with a start, "Camille! what would people say?"

people before you
me solemnly, and re-
That surplus supply
qualities, stereotyped
ideas, which goes

There are some
are worth trusting

would probably
a type of a
less happi-
the exist-
unsatisfied
you.
them.
again: it
and turns
ried, and

are tried.

with a distress too deep for tears. "I feel sometimes bewildered with pain, and the misery of what I have done. Life is wretchedness to me without you! I miss you as I should miss my eye-sight, my hearing, my hands. I cannot live without you, Camille!"

"Then, Amy, come to the loveliest of all lands with me, where every fair creation that life knows ministers to the sense; and we will begin another dual existence, which shall be like the reunion of two once miserable souls that have passed through earthly sorrows, and have been divided and re-united by Death. Come!"

She looked at his pale, worn face; she dwelt with her eyes on the familiar features; she noted every detail of dress, and let every line and hue, and small accessory sink into her mind and memory.

Yet although her soul told her that to lose him again would be death to her—for she was a creature only of impulses and affections, with no mental stamina to uphold her when famine of the heart should come—she yet said falteringly,

"Italy? Do you mean Italy? But it would be such an unheard of position—"

He, in his turn, was fixedly looking at the fair face, that had been at once his torment and delight, and he was wondering within himself how he could bear a final parting with its possessor.

At her words, his eyes turned from her, and fixed themselves moodily on the ground.

"A paltry answer to a question of life and death, is not what I should have thought to get from you, Amy," said he.

Lady Amy clasped her hands over her heart; its frantic beating frightened her.

"What shall I do!" said she, in accents of bewildered misery. "What shall I do? I am unspeakably wretched without you—yet—to defy everything; to do something that has no name, it is so strange. Well, I am punished, punished, punished—perhaps I deserve it!" She ended with a sigh.

"Then again we part?" he asked, hardly above a whisper.

She did not answer, and he continued.

"You have already braved public opinion; why should you not again? For you and I to be alone together in some lonely, lovely place, where there are flowers, and sea, and sunshine—would it not seem like rest after labour? Like waking on a bed of down after dreaming of being on the rack? Like the freedom of a forest after the tyranny of a dun-

geon? Like using free limbs after being cramped by fetters?"

"Yes, it would," she murmured.

"Come, then," he replied, effecting as much of an embrace as is possible, when two people are mounted.

But still she hesitated.

"Listen," she said, holding her reins, whip, and his hand all together, and looking into his face. "I will go to my little house in Wrode. Come to me there, and I will give you my answer. I will go to-morrow. Follow me directly, will you, *mon cœur?*"

He assented. They clasped each other in farewell, and their lips met.

Then she rode away in one direction to seek her mother; he in another, to overtake his friend.

They turned and looked back at each other with a light of love, and trust, and

hope on their faces. Amy wafted a kiss to him; he took off his hat, and bent his head low in return—the sunlight falling on his blue-black hair with metallic lustre.

As he did so, some one rode swiftly round a swell of the Downs between him and her.

It was Conrady, on a fiery Morocco barb, whose wild eyes and impatient hoofs told of its fierce, sun-land temperament.

Conrady recognised both Camille and Amy, for he was plebeianly long-sighted; it is doubtful if they recognised him.

Lady Amy, failing to find her mother, rode straight home.

She found Blagrave with Georgie. Without taking off her habit, she sank into a chair, and her hands fell by her side.

"Are you tired, dear Lady Amy?" asked Georgie. "Have you enjoyed your ride?"

"Yes," answered Lady Amy, absently, "I have enjoyed it. Georgie, dear, I want to go back to Wrode to-morrow."

"Do you?" cried Georgie, joyfully, "I am so glad. I hate Brighton!"

"It is a racketting sort of place," assented Lady Amy. "Mr. Blagrave, she is the nicest, most delightful girl! She always is ready to help you carry out any proposition you make; always willing to leave a place at a moment's notice, and go anywhere with you."

"I have not found her so very pliable, Lady Amy," Blagrave could not resist saying. "In one instance she ran counter to my wishes in such a way, that for five minutes I almost felt like quarrelling with her."

"And when was that?" asked Lady Amy.

But Blagrave, in obedience to a look

from Georgie, only laughed, and said he would tell her at some future time.

"I'll make her tell me when you are gone," said Lady Amy, confidently.

And when he had gone, she asked Georgie what he meant; and finally extorted the truth from her.

"I am very glad to hear this," she said, quietly. "Dear, faithful little Georgie; who would be true as steel to me, even if the whole world were against me. For you would be, I know. And the world is pretty well against me now. Well, I have deserved it; I cannot blame them. A woman in an equivocal position can never expect to have people treat her with the same deferential devotion that they did before, when her place was well defined and needed no explanation."

"Lady Amy," said Georgie, earnestly, "I am sure you will not be angry with

me if I tell you what I think; and that is, that it would be wise for you to try and do without excitement before excitement becomes a necessity of life to you. It is all so empty, so unsatisfying; I can see that it is. I never was gladder to hear anything than that you were going back to Wrode. I think we only make life worth having by following noble aims, and high ideals; the trivial pleasures of sense can never satisfy a woman's heart. Deeds of love, and thoughts of true things and pure, cut us off from that wretched absorption in frivolity and worldliness which paralyses our better self."

"I daresay you are right, Georgie. I think I'll try—to be different—better, perhaps—if my horrid temper, and pleasure-loving nature will let me!" She got up as she spoke, and went out of the room.

She had not been long gone before Lady Rosehew entered; having changed her riding-habit for a soft, natural tinted gown, trimmed with natural tinted ostrich feathers.

"Has Lady Amy got back?" she cried, hurriedly, to Georgie.

"Yes, she has been back some time," answered Georgie. "She has gone to her room."

Lady Rosehew went to the door as if with the intention of seeking her daughter, then returned, stifling a sigh, and saying half to herself,

"No use to try and make her tell me anything. I have no influence over her."

Presently she too went away, after requesting Georgie to tell her daughter that she had come to ask if she had returned safely.

CHAPTER XIV.

WAITING.

THEY arrived at Wrode towards evening. The sun was sinking through a sea of splendours. The glassy water was irradiated by long stripes of rose-colour, and gleaming orange. The yachts that still remained, lay motionless, their slight hulls lying insect-like against the glory of sunset colour. Green shores and still foliage, idealized by the gaudy glow, seemed to

promise repose and refreshment behind their verdant slopes, and leafy masses.

A goodly number of people still were lounging on the pier seats, or sauntering up and down.

There was a sultry stillness in the air that seemed to promise rain.

As Lady Amy and Georgie came up the steps from the steamer and set foot on the pier, a bulky figure slowly approached them, wheeled on one heel, and lounged away.

"That Conrady here!" cried Lady Amy, looking after him with aversion, and something that seemed like fear. "He dogs me, Georgie; I am sure he found out that I was coming, and so rushed here himself by a rather earlier train."

"Never mind!" said Georgie, soothingly, for Lady Amy was palpably distressed. "Forget all about him, the wretch!"

"Speaking of him seems to be your sole outlet for harsh words," said Lady Amy. "As for me, I *hate* him! I loathe him! The mean sneak with his base hirelings, and his bribe-bought lies! You've never seen me yet in one of my rages, have you? I am very nearly in one now; and as I do not want to frighten you, we will stop talking of him. Tell Burrard to get into the tramway, she always makes such an unnecessary fuss over the luggage."

They went up the pier in the tramway. Two or three people Lady Amy knew were in the car with her; she talked to them with so little of her usual frivolous, somewhat excited manner, that they thought she must be ill, and questioned her rather closely concerning her health.

Clematis Cottage, although it had been got ready at exceedingly short notice,

looked invitingly bright, and pretty; with the still rosy light of sunset pervading the little drawing room.

They soon sat down to a very good dinner, for which Georgie had a keen, and youthfully large appetite; but Lady Amy trifled with her sweet-bread and turbot mayonnaise, and cabinet pudding, rather than ate them. She seemed tensely strung with excitement; her air was one of supreme tension and unrest.

Returned to the drawing-room, she begged Georgie to play her something that should set her pulses leaping. Then she laughed—a laugh with the ring of silver against glass in it.

Georgie, before complying, came over to where she sat, and laying two cool, steady fingers on her wrist, watched the clock while she counted the heart's fevered pulsations.

"Set your pulses leaping!" repeated she, "why they are leaping now, Lady Fair—galloping."

Rising she went to the piano, and played a soft melody, which might have been a dirge for dead lilies, or a dead dove—perhaps a dead child; for its sadness was all sweetness, and its melancholy was rather pleasure-giving than profound. The soft light fell from airy girandoles, and fantastic figures with arms stretched on high, and from a graceful Satsuma lamp of unconventional design. It threw soft radiance on objects glittering and rare and fair. Here on the melting outlines of the figure on some *plaque* of pâte-sur-pâte, here on a bright thin dish full of stemless gardenia blossoms; there on a turquoise crackle jar; there on the white and delicate contours of a statuette; and it fell on the face of Lady Amy as she

lay in a long low chair, her head leaning back in an attitude of weariness; mignonne, yet high bred face, with its distinction of feature, its childlike grace of expression, its pale delicacy of hue. It fell on sweet Georgie Glyn, touching the keys with sympathetic tenderness, in the hope of soothing a troubled soul.

Outside the bright and glowing room, a stormy wind was rising that chased the rain-laden clouds, and made the jessamine sprigs lash the air and each other, and flung the long slight tendrils of the passion-flower vine against the window panes till the fragile branches were bruised and broken.

Georgie went on playing fitful snatches of airs that love had laid on her memory for life. Lady Amy, seemingly tranquilled, sat motionless, listening.

When Georgie ceased and rose from

the piano, she too rose, and in a few moments, with arm linked in arm, the two young figures might have been seen ascending the stairs; Georgie carrying a lighted candle, Lady Amy an unlighted one.

"You are the Wise Virgin, and I the Foolish one," said Lady Amy smiling. At the same moment, she touched the wick of her candle to her friend's, and gave her a light kiss. The two actions were simultaneous.

When another day came, Lady Amy was more watchful, more nervous, more eagerly expectant in face and manner than she had been the night before.

The morning—a wild and threatening one—wore on; luncheon time came, passed over, and the grey, windy afternoon with its promise of rain, set in.

Lady Amy had by turns read a little,

sung a little, sewed a little, pasted a few gaudy pictures on her long worked at screen.

As the clock struck four, she started up, exclaiming,

"I feel stifled—caged! I must go out for a walk."

"You are going to venture?" said Georgie doubtfully. "Well it may not be so bad as it looks—it often is not. Am I to go with you?"

"No—what a cheerful view you always take of things, you good child! No. I will go alone. I mean to walk along the sea-wall, too."

Now Georgie ventured to remonstrate.

"The sea-wall! And to-day? And alone? oh, dear Lady Amy"——

But Lady Amy had effectually cut her short, by flying out of the room and up stairs.

In a few moments she appeared at the door, clad in an ulster down to her heels, and with a boy's hat upon her head.

With a mischievous smile and most mocking intonation, she repeated her friend's words.

"The sea-wall! And to-day! And alone!" Then with a laugh she disappeared.

Any one who knows Wrode, knows its sea-wall, beaten by waves with foaming crests when the tide and the wind are high; and having in the stead of waves, pointed rocks covered with sea-weed green and slimy, when tide is low, and wind fails. A sea-wall, narrow, and ramparted on the side away from the water, by a sloping and high wall of stone. It is thought a piece of bravado for a woman to go there alone, for it is both lonely and dangerous. On bright sunny days it

is a delicious, invigorating place to walk, but "when leaves fall, and cold winds come," it is dismal and dreary, and bitingly chilly.

It was all three to-day, as Lady Amy walked rapidly along its stony curves, with head down-bent, and moody eyes fixed on the water.

As yet, she had met no one but a rough dog, and rougher man; the former had growled at her, the latter on meeting her, had begun to sing at the top of his voice, with a mixture of impertinence and show-off.

Daylight was dying; the full tide swept in with a vehement look and sound; the dark waves were foam-crested, and they beat the base of the wall on which she trod; looking down, she experienced a strange longing to be the prey of those hurling waters—to be their plaything and

their victim. That she would meet dark death at their hands, somehow she did not realize. It was simply the feeling that comes over so many people when they stand on a giddy verge and look over into restless water.

The light around and about her seemed to be an ethereal abstraction of the grey water, and the grey stones, and the grey sky. Gulls swept over head on strong, fleet wings, fisher-boats rocked in the offing; the distant opposite shore looked as if beaten clumsily out of some dull metal.

With her hands in the pockets of her ulster, Lady Amy walked on; her thoughts seemed resolved into as grey a negation as the storm-laden air. Heavy disappointment, aching dread that the future she now longed to grasp, was withdrawn from her; bitter conviction that she was not beloved

as she loved, overwhelmed her, and reduced her thoughts to a dull pain. Gazing down at the monotonous rush of the linked waves, she did not know that a solitary figure was approaching her from behind. The sound of footsteps was lost in the moan and roar of wind and water.

"Amy!" said a voice in her ear.

With a cry of delight, she turned and gave herself to the arms that were held to receive her.

"I thought you were not coming, Camille," she said, clinging to him, and pressing her cheek against his. "I thought you had gone to the land you painted to me in such glowing words, *alone!* That you had thought better of hampering yourself again with such a torment, as I have proved myself to be! And as I walked along here, I was weighed down with misery — I was

wretched enough before; but never, never have I been so intensely wretched, so hopelessly miserable, as I have been on this hateful sea-wall. No, not hateful since you have come; for I thought you were not coming—that you would not come. It is happiness that I can hardly believe, to have you here, actually here, with your arms around me, and your eyes looking into mine. You have come to take me away with you?"

"Then you will go!" he said, in a passion-stirred voice. "You will go with me, my own Amy? Of course I came for your answer. Did you for one instant think that I would not come? No, I can't believe that you really thought it. I have just been to your little house, and Miss Glyn told me where you were. You will come with me," holding her more closely to him, and pressing quick kisses

on her cold cheek. "We will be so happy! I vow that I will never say or do anything that can possibly vex you——"

"And I, too, vow the same thing!" cried she, fervently. "Can we be happy, shall we be happy, after all that has happened, after the wear and tear of such a miserable experience? Yes, I believe we shall. Georgie Glyn says we must all live up to a high ideal, to be happy. Teach me a high ideal, Camille. Don't let me be such a——"

"Butterfly blown by a summer breeze," supplied he, with a tender laugh. "You poor little thing; you have been like a moth driven by a storm. But you shall be neither now; you shall be my love, my companion, my friend; and I will try and supply other interests to take the place of those you lose. The past is like an ugly

dream, is it not, sweet? now that we are together again."

"Yes," she answered. "But it is a happy, *happy* waking! It is a deep happiness; such as seems to need tears for its expression rather than laughter. Oh, we will be so happy! And I'll not be a butterfly any more. Oh!" breathing a deep, heartfelt sigh, "if I *have* been a butterfly, I want to be one no longer. Being a butterfly is a most miserable thing. I want to be different from what I ever have been. Think of my rages! No—no! Do *not* think of them; forget them, forget them! You shall never see me in one again. I am going to be good now; all my prayers shall be that I may be good——"

"My darling little Amy," said he, with deep tenderness, moved almost to tears by the piteous sound of her self-upbraid-

ing voice, "you may be sure that I shall love you, however you are."

"But it has been so horrible!" cried she, putting her hands up to her head. "So horrible in every way——"

"My child, think of it no more. Forget the past. The future lies before us——"

"Tell me that you love me, as if you had never told me before," she interrupted.

With word, and look, and caress he told her.

In the dim, grey twilight, they stood there together, wild water below them, wild clouds above, wind hustling the waves, and sweeping moaning past them, mist descending and obscuring the outlines of the opposite shore; yet Elysium with rosy, balmy air full of the sym-

phonies of scent of a thousand flowers, could not have been sweeter to them.

Suddenly Lady Amy grasped his arm, looking with terrified eyes at someone who was approaching them along the narrow ledge of stone.

"Camille!" she said, in a shaking voice, "it is Conrady."

He turned and looked at the dark heavy form as it drew near them.

"Well, what if it is? He has a right to walk on the sea-wall, if he chooses."

But Lady Amy shivered (she very well knew why) and turned terribly pale.

Conrady was upon them. His dark and evil visage loomed above the pale and clear-featured face of her husband.

"Good evening, Lady Amy—I followed you here," said he, taking off his hat, with a twitching smile, and exaggerated

bow. "I did not know you had come to meet the man I hate!"

As far as the word "meet," he preserved a tone and look of laboured courtesy. Swift as a snake's spring was the transition from that forced courtesy, to the unrestrained fury of the last four words.

"*You* that lashed me across the face! You dog, you fellow that struck me! Do you think I've forgotten, because I've been so quiet? I've been biding my time; and my time has come now. It would have been better for you if it had come sooner, and come differently."

A blow; a woman's cry of terror and anguish; two figures reeling and swaying on the stony slippery verge, that the waters foamed below; another cry which rang to Heaven; then one slight form left standing there alone.

CHAPTER XV.

"HELP!"

A COAST-GUARD taking short quarter-deck turns up and down the plateau that ends the Wrode sea-wall, was startled and stirred by hearing, through the evening dimness that had begun to envelope land and sea, a heart-rending cry for help, repeated over and over again, until his whole rough nature was convulsed into chill dread.

For an instant he stood stock-still,

with eyes and mouth widely opened; then starting forward, he confronted a slim figure with a long coat nearly to the ground, and upon its head a boy's hat, shading a face whose looks of agony were enough to tincture with sorrowful memory the whole lifetime of him who looked on them.

Out of the gathered gloom of the evening shadows, this solitary, small form started like the very embodiment of innocent woe, with its dead-white youthful face, dilated eyes full of unspeakable terror, soft locks of hair about the forehead that the damp, salt-imbued air had twined into bright rings.

"What's the matter, my lad?" said the man.

Then the figure drew closer still, and the two wild eyes were lifted to his, while a pale and stiffened mouth gasped

a few frantic words, and he saw that it was a woman who was speaking to him.

"A boat! he is drowning!"

"Whereabouts?"

She stretched forth a trembling hand, and pointed behind her.

"Quick!" she panted.

The man set off running towards a small pier that a gentleman was building at the end of his grounds for his own use. It was not yet completed; he went along its half-finished length, with her following him; her insecure footsteps crossing precariously great gaps in masonry and wood-work, where the water swirled and foamed below, over heaps of stone, and boards, stumbling among ropes, and wire, and chippings of wood, and iron braces that more than once caught her, and nearly threw her down—to the end, where at the foot of some unpro-

tected, unrailed steps, a boat was fastened, and lay tossing with the tide.

He sprang in, and she, with a quick, uncalculating leap, followed him.

"Oh, don't ye come, ma'am! Don't ye come!"

She made some inarticulate sound, and with her own frail fingers laid hold of the hawser, where his rough hands were already grasping. He slipped the rope, drew it in, unshipped the oars, pushed off, and then placing them in the row-locks, sent the boat out into the darkness, over the restless water, with long, lusty pulls.

She, crouching in the stern, held a hand pointing, pointing, until at length it dropped suddenly, she sprang nearer to him, with a hoarse cry; he saw that her strained eyes were fixed on a dark,

moving object, a few oars' lengths away from them.

He neared it cautiously, and backed water; then drew in the oars, and seized the rope—at the same moment the dark object, moving on the water, disappeared; all was grey, metallic, dimly shining.

Lady Amy sank on her knees. Which was it? For that it was one of them, she was sure. But which? Her mind was torn by the conflict of dread and longing that the uncertainty involved. In those few seconds, alone, she suffered enough to expiate the folly, wilfulness, and sin of her whole lifetime.

It *must*, it *should* be Camille!

But if it was not? While *this one* was being saved, Camille was left to perish! Thought of agony! All this precious time given to the rescue of the guilty one, while the guiltless was left to fight

the grim foe, alone, unaided, with suffocated lungs, and limbs each instant yielding up their strength to the might of Death. Thoughts full of madness and despair! They swept through her mind like lightning.

The coast-guard dropping the rope, gently paddled the boat with one oar, and on the side next the shore, towards the place where the moving dark thing had been.

In an instant it was again discernible, close under their boat; and they saw that it was the head of a man.

The coast-guard, dragging in his oar, flung it down, and leaning over the other side, grasped the hair of the man whom the water was on the point of drawing under for the last time.

The hair was so short that he could not grasp it sufficiently to lift the heavy

body by it. It slipped away; again he snatched, caught the collar of the coat, and held on.

"Ma'am! back water for the love of Heaven, or we shall be over him!" cried he.

Lady Amy, with the inspiration that supreme and inexorable moments bring with them, took the oars, placed them in the rowlocks nearer astern, and held the boat back.

In another moment, the coast-guard had grappled with his dead—heavy burden, and brought it in.

Lady Amy turned, saw the beloved face of Camille, stark and white, but for a thin crimson line that streaked his cheek, and slowly flowed from a deep, cruel cut in the temple.

She left the oars, and throwing herself down beside the motionless figure, drew

the head to her breast with wild words of joy, and thankfulness, and eager prayers for a word in return.

"Camille! speak to me! Only one word!"

"My God, you've let the oars go!" cried the coast-guard, springing forward like a man distracted, and with vain efforts projecting himself almost out of the boat in the hope of reaching them; but it was too late. The oars had drifted away, and they were the only pair in the boat. "Oh, ma'am! however could ye do it! however could ye do it!" cried he, his hands going up to his head. "'Ere we are adrift, and this all but dead man with us."

Lady Amy's cry was echoed by another cry out on the water.

"There's another then?" said the coast-guard, his voice breaking into a quavering shrillness. But Lady Amy did not

answer, did not seem to hear him. She was crouching over her husband, chafing his hands, while in a voice that even he would not have recognised as hers, she muttered,

"Adrift! No help for you, my darling—and all my fault!"

"Adrift!" The coast-guardsman in his turn was saying, "and can't get no nearer yon other poor soul—not if we was to die for it!"

As if in response to his words, a choked cry for help floated through the mist-laden wind and reached them; for the wind came with the tide, and the tide was coming in.

"Help—sinking—help!"

But the boat went with the tide, and the tide hurried shoreward.

The coast-guard encircled his mouth with his hands.

"'Old on as long as ye can!" shouted he, against the wind.

Give him the help of words, if Fate had denied the power of giving the help of deeds.

"'Old on, friend! 'Old on!"

But there was no reply. All was still, save the soft lapping sound of the water against the boat's side, and the sighing of the wet wind.

Drifting with the tide, the tide carried them landward, and hurled them at last on a shingly stretch, where the boat's keel grated with a sound that was music to the man and the wretched woman. As for that other man, lying soaked and insensible, with the arms he had once loved about him, his ears were deaf to all sounds, and his eyes blind to all sights of earth.

The boat's keel grated; the coast-guard was out as if shot from a catapult, and with mad haste, pulled the boat out of

reach of the waves, and then with what assistance Lady Amy could give, lifted Camille out, and laid him on the small, shining stones.

Bewildered and exhausted, she sank down beside him, and lifted the heavy head to its old position on her breast, then she looked up with dumb pathetic helplessness into the sailor's face; a face now haggard, and damp with the dews of fatigue.

Night had actually closed in. She had no idea where they were. Even the coast-guard, familiar as he was with the shore, was some time collecting his recollection of locality. Poor fellow! torn between his desire to afford help to the, perhaps dying man on shore, and the surely drowning one out in the water, he was for a moment like one distracted; then, leaving the helpless pair together down on the

soaked pebbles, in the rain, and the wind, and the darkness, he rushed off in search of assistance. He found that he was near the Artillery barracks; the sound of a bugle told him so. He made his way to the barrack-yard; gasped out his story to a circle of tall blue and scarlet figures, who at once sprang to the emergency.

A cart was harnessed, and driven as near the spot where Camille and Lady Amy had been left, as possible. Then four soldiers, ran down the steep hill to the shore, and taking Camille up, bore him to the vehicle, his wife following like one in a dream. Others, meanwhile, had put off a boat, to the rescue of that miserable one, whose last bubbling cry had been given, and over whom waters had closed, and wind swept, and rain was driven.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE FALL OF NIGHT.

GEORGIE, shut into the warm, flower-scented brightness of the little drawing-room, looked out of the window at the departing figure of her protectress with a dissatisfied sigh.

"So wilful!" thought she, "so very, very wilful; and always battling against Fate." Then she composed herself, and going to the writing-table, began a letter to Blagrave.

She had not written more than a page, when she heard quick, firm steps resounding on the paved path that led from the gate to the door. She only had time to wipe her pen, and shut the blotting-book, when the door was opened, and, unannounced, Camille Langdon entered.

She rose with a frightened look, but extended her hand to him.

"Lady Amy has just gone out," she said.

"Where is she gone? Do you know?" he cut in breathlessly, and with the suspicion of a French accent which she had not noticed when he spoke to her before.

"She has gone to walk on the sea-wall—she *would* go! She often goes although I beg her not"——

"Ah!" said Langdon "the sea-wall; I know it. I think, instead of waiting for

moving object, a few oars' lengths away from them.

He neared it cautiously, and backed water; then drew in the oars, and seized the rope—at the same moment the dark object, moving on the water, disappeared; all was grey, metallic, dimly shining.

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"Camille! speak to me! Only one word!"

"My God, you've let the oars go!" cried the coast-guard, springing forward like a man distracted, and with vain efforts projecting himself almost out of the boat in the hope of reaching them; but it was too late. The oars had drifted away, and they were the only pair in the boat. "Oh, ma'am! however could ye do it! however could ye do it!" cried he, his hands going up to his head. "'Ere we are adrift, and this all but dead man with us."

Lady Amy's cry was echoed by another cry out on the water.

"There's another then?" said the coast-guard, his voice breaking into a quavering shrillness. But Lady Amy did not

friend, a child laughing at a rising bubble; a woman scowling at her rival, a man thrusting a murderous look into the eyes of a cowardly foe.

The clock struck half-past six. Time to dress for dinner. Should she do so, until Lady Amy returned? In her heart, Georgie was aware of a feeling of preparation against the event of Lady Amy not coming back. She was conscious that had a note been brought to her, saying that she was gone to London, and would Georgie please have a box of things sent to her at Buckland's Hotel, she would not have been unduly surprised.

The servant entered to bring candles and take away the tea.

Georgie suggested that as her ladyship had not yet returned, dinner had better be delayed a while.

The fire leapt in blazes, the room was

illumined by clear rosy light. Alone, yet not lonely, because loving, and beloved, and cherishing fair thoughts of an absent yet present one, the girl sat quiet, radiantly cheerful, her hand half hidden in her hair, as she supported her head, a diamond on one of the fingers sparkled like a tear, on another was the pearl, oval and pure, like the egg of some Elysian bird.

Tea, and bread and butter, and cake, staved off too urgent demands of appetite. Eight o'clock came but no Lady Amy.

The hand pointed to the quarter past, when Georgie, through the sigh of the wind, and the tapping of the vine against the window panes, heard the sound of wheels approaching the house. She held up her head and listened. The wheels stopped at the gate.

Some one violently opened the gate,

reach of the waves, and then with what assistance Lady Amy could give, lifted Camille out, and laid him on the small, shining stones.

Bewildered and exhausted, she sank down beside him, and lifted the heavy head to its old position on her breast, then she looked up with dumb pathetic helplessness into the sailor's face; a face now haggard, and damp with the dews of fatigue.

Night had actually closed in. She had no idea where they were. Even the coast-guard, familiar as he was with the shore, was some time collecting his recollection of locality. Poor fellow! torn between his desire to afford help to the, perhaps dying man on shore, and the surely drowning one out in the water, he was for a moment like one distracted; then, leaving the helpless pair together down on the

soaked pebbles, in the rain, and the wind, and the darkness, he rushed off in search of assistance. He found that he was near the Artillery barracks; the sound of a bugle told him so. He made his way to the barrack-yard; gasped out his story to a circle of tall blue and scarlet figures, who at once sprang to the emergency.

A cart was harnessed, and driven as near the spot where Camille and Lady Amy had been left, as possible. Then four soldiers, ran down the steep hill to the shore, and taking Camille up, bore him to the vehicle, his wife following like one in a dream. Others, meanwhile, had put off a boat, to the rescue of that miserable one, whose last bubbling cry had been given, and over whom waters had closed, and wind swept, and rain was driven.

on his little patient, Lily, shook his head before replying. Georgie augured ill from that discouraging motion.

"As far as I can gather from her ladyship, he was pushed off the sea-wall by some one; he must have struck on some of those nasty rocks at the foot of the wall; if the tide was not at the highest —there, there, Miss Glyn, no turning pale, please; there's nothing to turn pale about."

"Oh, Dr. Evans, you will not tell me the truth now, just because I turned pale. Do, pray tell me, is he seriously injured!"

"'Seriously' is too serious a word," answered the Doctor, with his professionally cheery manner. "Well, since you have chosen the word, he *is* seriously hurt. See here, Miss Glyn, cannot you get Lady Amy out of the room to take off those wet clothes of hers? Tell her it's bad for the patient to have such damp

She had not written more than a page, when she heard quick, firm steps resounding on the paved path that led from the gate to the door. She only had time to wipe her pen, and shut the blotting-book, when the door was opened, and, unannounced, Camille Langdon entered.

She rose with a frightened look, but extended her hand to him.

"Lady Amy has just gone out," she said.

"Where is she gone? Do you know?" he cut in breathlessly, and with the suspicion of a French accent which she had not noticed when he spoke to her before.

"She has gone to walk on the sea-wall—she *would* go! She often goes although I beg her not"——

"Ah!" said Langdon "the sea-wall; I know it. I think, instead of waiting for

CHAPTER XVII.

" Tears and sunshine, sobs, and the scent of flowers,
A last farewell, and the songs of birds."

A DAY came, splendid with the red sunshine of autumn, with the glow of crimson, and purple, and yellow leaves; glorious with rarefied air, and jewelled sea, and melting outlines of glittering, distant shores. The day that was to see their parting; the parting of Camille and Amy; passionate erring pair, who had been united, severed, re-united, only to be for ever divided.

The passion-flowers wreathe the open

windows of Amy's bright and luxurious room, the sunlight steals an entrance through the half-closed Venetians, the cool sweet air enters too, and stirs the lighter objects lying on the dressing-table; stirs Amy's hair as she kneels rigid and tearless and utterly pale, beside the bed where her husband lies.

He is calm and conscious now, after miserable days of stupor, unconsciousness, delirium. His faint and emotionless words sink into the heart that is breaking beside him, and are remembered till it is cold and still, as his will be soon.

"My dearest Amy, dearest child, it is better so, perhaps"——

She only presses the hand that she has clasped between both of her's, more closely to her breast.

They have told her that she must not agitate him—that she must be calm.

Unfortunately despair does not bring her calmness as it does to some, and she is in despair.

"It seems hard, perhaps, just as we were on the brink of another—perhaps a happier life. Do you remember that song you sung? I heard it; black—and passion-flowers; poor Amy. Amy is a sweet name; something wrung it from my heart one night as you drove past me in the dark. Did you hear? Yes! How was it all? It's not so clear to me as it was once—a long time ago. I have been tormented; so have you; and this is the end. Endless flowers and sunshine—but not for us; for you, perhaps, never for me. Love, do not cry so. What do you say? That life has no sunshine nor flowers to you without me? I am glad. Life only holds now one sweet thing for

me; your kiss—a last kiss, a last word; what is your last word to me, Amy?"

Tears of agony, sobs that rent her young heart, dumb caresses of passionate despair—that was all his love could give him in this supreme moment of farewell.

Cruel sunlight, cruel caged bird singing somewhere with shrill ecstasy.

"Speak, Amy darling—but do not say 'good-bye'—I want to find you—meet you somewhere—don't say 'good-bye,' Amy!"

He raised himself a little as he spoke, and looked at her out of eyes that were full of the inexhaustible mystery of Death.

"Camille—my love!"

"Really your love? Through all? After the hard words——"

"Forgive!"

"My child, do not sob so. I forgave you long ago. You sob as if your heart was breaking, Amy."

"It is *broken.*"

"And for me?"

She twined her arms about him in a last, passionate embrace, whispering words of love and despair. It was midday yet in her heart was midnight—midday, and sunshine—tears, and a broken heart. Sobs—and a light wind wafting the scents of flowers; a last farewell—and the shrill song of a caged bird.

Years have come and gone. Clematis Cottage is let to a little prim old maid, who has had the passion-flower torn down and replaced it by a purple clematis, which she prefers.

Hellmuth Lodge has for its tenants—and has had for three years—Lady Rosehew and Lady Amy Bellamy. For after the marriage of Miss Glyn to George Blagrave, Lady Amy, a broken-spirited

woman, was only too thankful for her mother's companionship and support. There are no more quarrels between them; Lady Amy has forgotten how to quarrel seemingly. Sometimes they talk over the past, with sad, unreproachful eyes looking into each other's faces.

It is hard for people who knew the gay and brilliant Lady Amy of other days, to believe that this pale woman who never laughs—seldom smiles, is she.

If ever a passionate nature were chastened by sorrow, hers is. If ever a volatile temperament were subdued by suffering, hers is. If ever a jealous, violent and unreasonable spirit were disciplined by pain, hers is. But as she herself says, she only reaped what she sowed. She sowed the wind; she reaped the whirlwind. She merited none of virtue's recompenses, and they have been

withheld from her. She deserved all folly's punishments, and she has received them.

To-night Lady Rosehew and her daughter are awaiting visitors. The visitors are Mr. and Mrs. Blagrave, and their little son.

It is a bright May evening, full of the glow cast by rosy clouds which the sun left blushing behind him as he sank beneath the horizon.

Wheels are heard approaching the gate; they have come, those happy people, with whose fate Lady Amy's is in such sad contrast.

A few moments and they have met; Lady Amy is kissing Georgie, Lady Rosehew shaking hands with Blagrave.

The little son stands looking on solemnly, until his turn comes to be kissed and caressed.

Lady Amy looks from Mrs. Blagrave's dimpled laughing face, to Mr. Blagrave's serene and smiling one.

"This," she thinks, "is happiness!"

She catches the reflection of herself in a mirror, as she turns to take her friend to her room:

"And that is a little grey woman all pale and sad, who might have been happy, if she had taken anybody but herself for a guide."

THE END.

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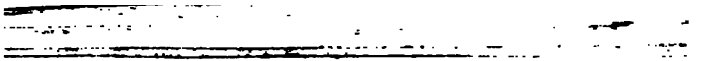
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